

A
VINDICATION
OF THE
PRINCIPLES and PRACTICE
OF
Protestant Dissenters:

CONTAINING

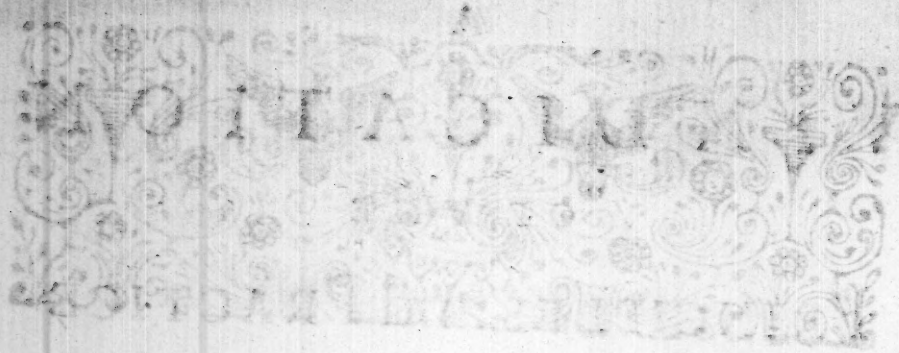
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| I. A brief History of the
Dissenters. | IV. A Defence of the Rights
of Conscience, private Judg-
ment, and the Toleration
of peaceable Dissenters. |
| II. The Hardships of Mi-
nisterial Conformity. | V. Answers to several popu-
lar Objections commonly
urged. |
| III. Reasons for separating
from the Church of <i>Eng-
land</i> peculiar to the Laity. | |

Designed and fitted, by way of Question and Answer, for the Use of Dissenting Parents, to assist them in the instructing their Children concerning the true Grounds of their Non-conformity, as well as to furnish the Unlearned, in general, with a fair and plain View of the Controversy.

By SAMUEL BOURN, E. M.

L O N D O N:

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Ludgate-Street. MDCCXLVIII.



Proceedings of the

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T H E
P R E F A C E.

CONSCIENTIOUS DISSENTERS, who judge their own Principles true, and their Practice right, are under an Engagement of training up their Children and Youth in the Knowledge of the same Principles, and of leading them into the same Practice.

To assist such Dissenters in that Branch of Education this Catechism was composed: Wherein, if any Facts are wrong stated, any false Principles asserted, any weak or inconclusive Reasoning built upon right Principles, or, if any Charges are unfairly brought against the established Church and Worship, the Author stands open to Conviction, and thereupon will readily retract

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them: For he is far from being disposed to widen the Breach, or cherish Animosities between (what is called) the national Church and the Dissenters; he rather wishes to see them united on a Scriptural Foundation, each Side divesting itself of unreasonable Prejudices, Pride, Tenaciousness, Inveteracy, or Revenge, (deadly Enemies of Truth and Goodness) and heartily coalescing on the Principles of that Gospel, which all acknowledge as the declared Will of their common Master, and the sole sufficient Rule of Faith and Practice: Nevertheless, as he cannot but consider dissenting from the ecclesiastical Establishment, as it is now constituted, the Duty both of Ministers and People, so, though he would be pleased to see that Obligation removed, yet, while it subsists, he cannot but think it right to explain the Grounds of Nonconformity, and to vindicate them from those Objections which are usually alledged, and industriously propagated by the Zealots for Conformity.

PIETY and VIRTUE are indeed the chief Strength and Glory of Protestant Dissenters, as of all Society; the deserting of which, if ever they are so unfortunate, will

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will expose them to the Contempt both of God and Man: But as Truth and Liberty are subservient to PIETY and VIRTUE, those are their secondary Strength and Ornament; and therefore they are prompted by the powerfullest Motives to contend for and support them.

Nor can they be excused, if their young ones are educated in ignorance of their Principles, or Indifference to their Practice: The Consequence of which would naturally be their becoming bigotted Separatists; or loose Apostates; whereas, on the contrary, explaining to and inculcating on their Minds, the genuine Principles of Protestant Nonconformity, (which are, the free Use of Scripture, and of the Understanding and Conscience in reference thereunto, with the Duty of maintaining the original Simplicity and Purity of God's Service) is the Way to bring up a Race of rational steady Conformists to Christ's Institutions, able to plead the Cause thereof, against all ecclesiastical Imposers, and all obtruded human Forms of Worship: If every Professor of Christianity should be able to give a Reason of his Christian Hope, or why he is a Christian, it is likewise highly expedient that such

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as so call themselves, should be capable of assigning a Reason why they are Protestants, and why Protestant Dissenters: If the Foundation of these Distinctions be of any Import to Mankind, (and surely it is, in a considerable Degree) the rising Generation ought to be thoroughly acquainted with it, and apprised thereof: For who will be solicitous to guard or defend what they understand not the Nature and Value of.

The best Principles may be disgraced, and their Influence on others greatly weakened, by the Miscarriages of those who pretend to them: Protestant Dissenters therefore must be extremely careful, lest by any unsuitable Actions they dishonour those excellent ones they profess: It should be their constant Endeavour to recommend them to all, but more especially to their Offspring, by an unblameable and holy Conversation.

On the other hand, it is a most ungenerous Folly, to transfer the Odium of any Man's Crimes to the Cause or Doctrine he maintains; unless these naturally lead to such a Behaviour: Where that is the Case, they may be justly reproached, but it is on their own Account, not on the others. There are but few that judge equitably on
this.

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this Head; so that nothing is more frequent than for Christianity itself, as well as Non-conformity, to be defamed (and most injuriously) on the Score of its vicious Professors:-----But Wisdom is justified of her Children.

*If the Faults in the Constitution and Offices of the national Church are represented any where in the following Sheets, with more Sharpness of Expression than some may think fitting, this, I can assure them, proceeds not from any Acrimony in the Writer, any Resentment, or Inclination to irritate the Minds of others, but purely to impress the Subject, with a Force adequate to its Importance, on the Understanding of the less attentive Reader, and on the Hearts even of the learned virtuous Clergy themselves (if this Book shall haply fall under their Inspection;) that a due Sense may be excited in all, of the Necessity of a Reformation, in order to unite the best Men of all Parties, in one extensive, firm, and comely Body of Protestants, and that the worthiest Ministers and most valuable of the Laity may enter the Church, as in Truth the Fold of Christ, without that Reluctance, those uneasy Scruples, and Misgivings of Conscience, which
often*

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often accompany the required Subscriptions, Declarations, Oaths, and Practices, in the Breasts of the most judicious and upright: The effecting of which would be exceedingly grateful to Thousands, both in and out of the Establishment, and in particular to

The AUTHOR.



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THE
PRINCIPLES
OF

Protestant Dissenters

EXPLAINED, &c.

CHAP. I.

A Brief History of the Dissenters.

Q.  RE all Men under Obligation to worship God in public Assemblies, or publickly to worship God?

A. Yes: — Heathens, Jews, Mahometans, Christians, acknowledge this Obligation, and practise under its Influence, as a Dictate of Reason, or a Law of Nature.

Q. What is an Assembly of Men, met together to worship God, usually call'd?

B

A. A

2 *The Protestant Dissenters Catechism.*

A. A Church: — The visible Church is a Congregation of faithful Men met together to worship God, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered, according to Christ's Ordinance, in all Things which of Necessity are requisite to the same ^a.

Q. What is the Rule according to which Men are to worship God?

A. The Will of God, as far as it can be any way discovered.

Q. What is the RULE of Worship acknowledged by Christians?

A. The Will of God, as revealed by Jesus Christ and his Apostles, in the New Testament.

Q. Have any Men just Authority and Right to prescribe any new Parts or Modes of Worship, besides what God has prescribed, or to make any Addition to God's Word?

A. No.

Q. If any Man or Men attempt to do this, is it not the Duty of all other Christians to oppose such an Attempt, and to adhere to the New Testament, as a Rule of Worship?

A. Yes.

Q. What is the distinguishing Characteristick of the Protestant Dissenters?

A. Their declaring for a Scripture Religion; and the Rights of Conscience, in opposition to the Lordship of Men in the Kingdom and

^a The 19th Article of the Church England.

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Church of Christ, and all their arbitrary Impositions.

Q. Ought not every Man to be thus far a Dissenter?

A. Yes.

Q. Do Faithfulness and Loyalty to Jesus, the King of his Church, a Regard to the Honour of his Government, and to a Man's own spiritual Interest, require it?

A. Yes.

Q. Who have been the chief Tyrants in the Kingdom of Christ, and the chief Corruptors of his Religion?

A. An ignorant, idle, proud, worldly, unholy Clergy^b.

Q. Has not then such a Clergy been the Church's great Plague?

A. Yes.

Q. Did Jesus Christ appoint and authorize such a Clergy?

A. No: He appointed none but able and faithful Men. 2 Tim. ii. 2.

Q. Can People be excused for submitting to, countenancing, and supporting such a Clergy?

A. No.

Q. Which is the most notorious Instance of this Lordship of the Clergy, on one Hand, and blind Submission of the Laity, on the other?

A. Popery, or the Church of Rome.

Q. How long, and how far has **POPERY** prevailed?

^b Baxter's Compass. Couns. p. 129.

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A. About a thousand Years: Having spread over almost all *Europe*, over large *Districts* of *America*, and penetrated into *Africa* and *Asia*.

Q. Is it any Argument against the Truth and Excellence of the Christian Religion, that such a tyrannical Power has risen up, prospered, and continued so long in the Church?

A. No. It is a strong Argument, rather, for the Truth and divine Original of Christianity, that the sacred Writings so plainly foretell the Rise, Progress, and long Continuance of this Antichristian Power.

Q. Was not England, for many Ages, enslaved under the Romish Priests and Prelates, and subjected to the Pope?

A. Yes.

Q. What Character of the Churches and Monasteries of the Papal Religion is given by some of their own Writers?

A. That they were become the very Habitation of Devils, the Holds of every foul Spirit, and Cages of every hateful and unclean Bird, the Antichambers of Hell.

Q. Were

Daniel vii. and viii. *2 Thess.* ii. 3, 4. *1 Tim.* iv. 1, 2, 3. *2 Tim.* iii. 1—6. *1 John* ii. 18. iv. 1—5. *Rev.* xiii. and xvii.

A. *Alsted* reckons up 225,444 Monasteries in *Christendom*; now, accounting but 20 to each Monastery, the Total of these idle and vicious Creatures amounts to four Millions, five hundred Thousand and eighty-eight. Add the almost innumerable Multitude of these devouring Locusts, which are to be found in the *American* Dominions of the Princes of

The Protestant Dissenters Catechism. 5

Q. Were there no Attempts of good Men, during this Time, to recover the Church of Christ from this dreadful Apostacy?

A. Yes: The Waldenses and Albigenes abroad, and the Wickliffites in England, bore their Testimony against the Antichristian Corruptions; and were eminent DISSENTERS from the Papal Church^e.

1509.

of the *Romish* Religion, and what an Opinion must we have of that Church which breeds and nourishes such Swarms of Devourers?

^e The *Waldenses* (who existed long before *Peter of Waldo*) were so called from their inhabiting the Vallies of the *Alps*; and arose from one *Leo*, in the Time of *Constantine the Great* and of *Pope Silvester*, from whom they were at first stiled *Lenists*. The *Albigenes* were so named from the Country *Albie*, and *Lollards*, from one *Lollard* a Teacher amongst them.

John Wickliffe was born about the Year 1324, near *Richmond* in *Yorkshire*. After he had been duly instructed in the necessary Rudiments of Learning, he was entered Commoner of *Queen's-College, Oxford*; he soon removed to *Merton-College*, where he was first Probationer, and afterwards Fellow. Here he greatly distinguished himself by his extraordinary Abilities and vast Application. He diligently studied the Civil and Canon Laws, as well as the municipal Laws of his own Country. He was indefatigable in reading the holy Scripture; on which he wrote Notes, Expositions, and Homilies. Next to the divine Oracles he was most conversant with the four Fathers of the *Latin Church*. He was an avowed Enemy to the Fryars of that Age, whose Errors, Usurpations and Vices he eagerly opposed. He was also a Champion for *King Edward III.* against the Pope, who threatned that Prince with a Citation to *Avignon*, to answer for refusing the Homage and Tribute for his Dominions, which his weak Predecessor *John* had actually paid, and promised for his Successors, as an Acknowledgement of Vassalage to the holy See. He spared not in his Lectures, Sermons,

1509. Q. *What King of England did Providence first employ to deliver this Kingdom from the Tyranny of the Pope?*

A. *Henry VIII. a Prince of a bold and resolute Spirit: Qualifications that fitted him for so difficult and almost desperate an Undertaking.*

Q. *What gave the first Occasion to his Attempt?*

A. *The Pope's refusing to divorce him from his Queen Katharine, after having, for several Years, amused him with vain Hopes of gratifying him in that Point.*

Q. *Was King Henry a real Friend to the Reformation, or had he an Inclination to advance pure Religion, and abolish Popery?*

A. *No: He was rather an Enemy to Reformation. He was a zealous Opposer of Luther, wrote bitterly against him, and obtained of the*

and Writings, on all Occasions, to expose the Romish Court, and lay open the Vices of the Clergy, both regular and secular. He preached strenuously against several of the Popish Doctrines. He saw and urged the Necessity of the People's having the Bible in the vulgar Tongue; and accordingly undertook and published a Translation thereof. On both these Accounts he was inveighed against as a Heretic, and prosecuted. He was an illustrious Forerunner of the Reformation of the English Church: And the Light which he kindled diffused itself far abroad; nor was it ever extinguished, but, as the Path of the Just, shone more and more, till it became almost a perfect Day.

John Hus and Jerome of Prague appeared for Reformation in Germany; and after them Zuinglius, Luther, and others, about the Year 1517.—See Wicliffe's Doctrine in Pierce's Vindication.

Pope

Pope the Title of Defender of the Faith, for employing his Pen as a Champion for the Papal Cause. He passed an Act of Parliament for establishing several of the grossest Errors of Popery, viz. The corporal Presence, Communion in one Kind, Vows of Chastity, private Masses, the Celibacy of the Clergy, and auricular Confession; adjudging those to be burnt alive, without Benefit of Abjuration, who should speak or write against the first of these, and making it Felony to dispute against the other five: And many were cruelly put to Death on these Accounts.

1547. *Q. When King Edward VI. that pious and excellent young Prince, succeeded his Father, and made some godly Attempts towards a Reformation, were there any DISSENTERS who scrupled to comply with the Ceremonies and Popperies which were however still unhappily retained in the English Church?*

A. Yes: Bishop Hooper; who, refusing to be consecrated in the Popish Habits, was imprisoned, and his Life endangered. Rogers likewise, Philpot, Tymes, Bishop Latimer, Bishop Farrar, Dr. Taylor, Coverdale, Martyr, Bucer, most of whom were Sufferers in the next Reign, and many others, were all of dissenting Principles, and declared against the Popish Habits and Ceremonies.

1553. *Q. Were there any DISSENTERS in the Reign of bloody Queen Mary, Edward's Successor?*

A. Yes:

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A. Yes: All good Protestants; many of whom were burnt to Ashes for their Dissent, and others fled beyond Sea.

Q. *When a Number of those dissenting Protestants, who fled beyond Sea, were peaceably settled at Franckfort in Germany, under the eminent John Knox, who was it that raised a Disturbance there, and a Prosecution against his own Countrymen and Fellow Exiles?*

A. One Dr. Richard Cox, a high Church Zealot, who, in a turbulent Manner, introduced the *English* Liturgy, and formed a treacherous and scandalous Accusation against Mr. Knox^f.

1568. *Q.* *When Queen Elizabeth succeeded, were there not Men of dissenting Principles in the established Church?*

A. Yes: And the Terms of Conformity to the Church, and of Employment and Preferment in it, were made so intolerably severe, and so contrary to what they apprehended the Scripture warranted, that great Numbers of the most conscientious Ministers, disapproving them, were turned out of their Places, silenced, banished, imprisoned, and murdered for Conscience's sake, and for opposing Church Tyranny and Foppery^g.

Q. *To*

^f This Dr. Cox was afterward Bishop of Ely, and zealous for erecting Crosses; and wrote to *Cassander*, a Papist, for his Advice about them. *Pierce*, p. 38.

^g Queen Elizabeth obliged the Dissenters either to conform or to abjure the Realm, and not to return without her Licence,

Q. *To what Cause may the Severities of Queen Elizabeth's Reign upon Dissenters be ascribed?*

A. Partly to the Queen's affecting Pomp and Magnificence in the Worship of God, to her assuming Authority in Matters of Religion, and her Desire to oblige the Papists, and reconcile them to her Government; and, partly, to the imposing, cruel Disposition of the principal Ecclesiastics of that Time; as the Archbishops Parker, Whitgift, Bankroft, Bishop Aylmer, &c.

Q. *By what Names were the Protestant Dissenters, and Men of their Principles, distinguished in this and the following Reigns?*

A. By the Names of Puritans and Nonconformists.

Q. *Was it not an Instance of our Lord's Concern for his Church, that he raised up many excellent Men therein, to plead the Cause of Reformation and Purity of Religion, and to oppose Ecclesiastical Impositions?*

A. Yes.

Q. *When King James I. came to 1602. the Throne, were there not still Dissenters in the established Church?*

Licence, on Pain of being punished as Felons, without the Benefit of Clergy; as we know some of them were. — Reflect. on Dr. Sacheverel's Answer to the House of Commons, p. 21.

In this Reign Mr. Udal suffered in a most barbarous manner, for writing against the Male-administration of the Bishops. — Pierce, p. 129.

A. Yes:.

A. Yes: A Petition for Church Reformation was offered to the King, signed by a thousand Ministers; but the Bishops, by little Arts, not only hindered Reformation, but carried on the Persecution against moderate and conscientious Churchmen and Dissenters with great Violence.

Q. How severe was the Persecution under King James I?

A. Several hundreds of the most conscientious and faithful Ministers were silenced, deprived, excommunicated, imprisoned, and forced out of their native Country^h.

Q. Did not this Prince, under the Influence of certain Prelates, issue out an irreligious Proclamation, which gave great Offence to all Men of Piety throughout his Kingdoms?

A. Yes: The Proclamation for Sports on the Lord's Day, called the Book of Sportsⁱ.

1625. Q. When King Charles I. succeeded, was the Church any further reformed, and the Number of DISSENTERS thereby lessened?

A. No: But rather deformed, by Attempts to reduce it nearer the Roman Standard, thereby making Communion with the established Church more difficult; at the same time the Persecution

^h See *Altare Damasc.* Pref.

ⁱ Archbishop Abbot was greatly grieved at this impious Edict. When King James's Works, bound up together, were brought to him, and he found that Proclamation among them, he tore it out in a Passion, and ordered it to be erased in every Copy. — *Turner* of Holiness, Health, and Wealth.

of conscientious Ministers grew more violent, so that DISSENTERS greatly increased.

Q. What contributed to this?

A. The Popish Queen, whom King Charles had married, and her Agents; and the fierce imperious Disposition of Archbishop Laud, and some other Bishops, who plagued and prosecuted all (except the Papists) that refused subscribing to their arbitrary unscriptural Injunctions, as to many divine Institutions^k.

Q. Did

^k What were Archbishop Laud, Bishop Cosins, and other Innovators and Persecutors of this Time? If they were not Enthusiasts, fierce and raving Enthusiasts, they were much worse; and the best Apology which can be made for them is, that they were stark mad.—Their Flattery to the Crown was monstrously insidious and impudent.—What Regard had this great Prelate (Laud) to Conscience, and consequently to the Salvation of Souls!—Guides, such as Laud and his Brethren, who were never quiet, till they had carried Things to Extremity, and subverted the Constitution.—Archbishop Laud, a hot-headed Monk, who had caused so much Violence and Confusion.—Law and Religion were still pretended by Laud and his Faction, even whilst they were doing the most notorious Acts of Injustice, and oppressing Conscience.—He affected the Title of Holiness, and most holy Father.—The Books of Papists were licenced by his Chaplains, as approved of by himself; when new Books against Popery were forbid to be printed.—Exam. of Reas. and Facts, in the Bishop of Chichester's Sermon before the House of Lords, Jan. 30, 1732.—Pierce's Vindic. p. 308.

If Archbishop Laud's Picture is not drawn enough to the Life, let the following Instance of Inhumanity finish it.

“ Dr. Leighton, for writing against the Cruelty of the
“ Prelates, was seized by a Warrant from the High Com-
“ mission Court, and dragged to Bishop Laud's House;
“ thence, without any Examination, was carried to New-
“ gate,

Q. Did not Licentiousness and Profanation of the Lord's Day advance in this Reign?

A. Yes: King Charles, under the unhappy Influence of Archbishop Laud, republished the Book for Sports on the Lord's Day; and Ministers were enjoined to read it in the Churches, and were treated with Severity if they refused.

Q. What other unjustifiable Actions are imputed to King Charles I?

A. He is charged with overturning the civil Constitution, by levying Taxes on his Subjects without Consent of Parliament, and exercising an illegal Power in a Variety of Instances: Nor was he ever cleared from the horrid Imputation of countenancing, if not authorizing, the murdering in cold Blood, above a hundred

*“gate, clap'd in Irons, and thrust into a nasty Hole, where
 “he continued from Tuesday Night till Thursday Noon,
 “without Meat or Drink. In that loathsome Place they
 “kept him fifteen Weeks; not permitting Wife or Friend
 “to come near him, and exposed to Rain and Snow.—
 “At his Trial, Laud charged the Judges to be severe upon
 “him; accordingly they sentenced him to have his Ears cut
 “off, and his Nose slit, to be whipped at a Post, to stand
 “in the Pillory, to pay a thousand Pound Fine, and to lie
 “in Prison till Death. This terrible Sentence was executed
 “in the most cruel Manner; his Ears were cut off, his
 “Nose slit, his Face branded with burning Irons, he was
 “tied to a Post, and whipped to that cruel Degree, that
 “every Lash brought away the Flesh; he was kept in the
 “Pillory two Hours in Frost and Snow.—After this he
 “was kept ten Weeks in Mire and Dirt; and close shut
 “up twenty-two Months, and a Prisoner ten Years, till
 “the Parliament delivered him in 1640, when he could
 “neither go, see, nor hear.”—Pierce's Vindic. p. 179.*

thousand

thousand Protestants, by *Irish* Papists¹. His betraying the *Rochellers* is an indelible Stain on his Memory; and his Diffimulation with the Parliament, in the Negotiations between them, was a Blemish in his Character that no Flattery can expunge.

Q. *What was the Effect of these arbitrary tyrannical Proceedings in Church and State?*

A. They occasioned a Civil War; in which the Parliament and the wiser and soberer Part of the Nation stood up, to defend their Religion and Liberties; both which were openly attacked, and, humanly speaking, in Danger of immediate Ruin.

Q. *Who made War against the King and Bishops?*

A. The Parliament, consisting of Churchmen^m.

Q. *How did the Civil War issue?*

¹ For the Evidence that King *Charles I.* countenanced the *Irish* Rebellion and Massacre—See Dr. *Calamy's* Abridgment, Vol. I. p. 42. *Pierce's* Vindic. p. 195. *Bennet's* Memorial, p. 261. with the Defence of it. The Declaration of the Commons of *England* in Parliament, expressing their Reasons for no further Addresses to the King, Feb. 11, 1647, with the Resolutions of the Lords and Commons.

^m The Remonstrances against both the Crown and the Mitre, and the Civil War itself, were begun, and carried on by Churchmen, by constant Churchmen; by a Parliament full of Churchmen.—Bishop *Hoadley's* Def. of the common Rights of Subjects, p. 150.

There was but one *Presbyterian* in the House of Commons when the War began.—*Baxter's* Life, Fol. p. 41. *Bennet's* Memorial.

14. *The Protestant Dissenters Catechism.*

A. In defeating the King's Forces, and beheading him.

Q. Was the beheading of the King a national Act?

A. No.

Q. Was it the Act of the PRESBYTERIANS?

A. No: For they openly opposed and protested against it, at a Crisis when their doing so was very dangerous to their Interest, and when the Episcopal Party, who, by their violent Measures, had not a little contributed to that sad Event, wanted either Courage or Honesty to do the like.

Q. Whose Act was it?

A. The Act of a wicked Faction or Party in the Army, influenced by Popish Councils, and managed by OLIVER CROMWELLⁿ.

Q. Though Oliver Cromwell was an Usurper, and had no legal Right to the Government, yet did he not greatly raise the Glory of the Nation, and encourage Justice and Religion in it?

A. Yes: This is an undeniable Truth. At the same time it is not pretended, that this excused any Acts of Injustice or Tyranny with which he may be chargeable.

1660. *Q.* Who had a principal Hand in restoring Charles the Second?

ⁿ Dr. Du Moulin, in 1662, offered to prove before the Judges, by living Witnesses, that the *English* Jesuits sent eighteen of their Body, as Emisseries, secretly to promote this Design.

A. The

A. The *Presbyterians*; who, though vehement Assertors of Liberty, never abetted the Murder of his Father, never renounced their Allegiance to him, and were active in every Attempt to restore him °.

Q. What accompanied his Restoration to the Crown?

A. What wise and good Men of all Denominations must grieve to remember, a Deluge of Vice and Wickedness P.

Q. How were the *Presbyterians* requited for their Activity in the Royal Cause?

A. By an Act of Uniformity, and other cruel Laws, whereby above two thousand worthy conscientious Ministers were silenced, fined, imprisoned, banished Corporations, &c. and many thousands of their People fined, plundered, put in Gaols, and murdered q.

Q. Did

° *Banger's Com. Rights*, p. 159.

P *Bishop Eurnet's History of his Life.* And the secret History of King *Charles II.* and *James II.*

q When the Lord Chamberlain *Manchester* told the King (while the Act of Uniformity was under Debate) that he was afraid the Terms were so hard, that many of the late Ministers could not comply with them; Bishop *Sheldon*, being present, replied, "I am afraid they will."—Dr. *Bates's* Funeral Sermon for Mr. *Baxter*.

Hence it is plain, the Design of the Bishops was to shut them out of the Church, and then to reproach and punish them for not coming in. It is evident also, that the Ministers were honeiter Men than the Bishop feared they were.

At *Lady-day*, 1666, the Five-Mile Act commenced, by which all Non-conformist Ministers were forbidden, upon Pain of six Months Imprisonment, to come, or be, within

Q. Did not these ejected Ministers manifest a noble as well as pious Disposition of Mind, in refusing Conformity on sinful, low Conditions; choosing

five Miles of any Corporation, or any Place where they had been Ministers, unless they would take an Oath, called the *Oxford Oath*, not to endeavour any Alteration in Church or State: Of which Mr. *Baxter* says, it was credibly reported, that the Earl of *Southampton*, then Lord High-Treasurer of *England*, said, no honest Man could take it: Yet, I suppose the Clergy took it.—*Baxter's Life*.

An Estimate has been published of near 8000 Protestant Dissenters who perished in Prison, in the Reign of King *Charles II.* And they suffered in their Trades and Estates, in the Compass of three Years, at least two Millions. Sixty thousand suffered in different Ways between the Restoration of King *Charles II.* and the Revolution, 5000 of whom died in Prison.—*Neal's History of the Puritans*, Vol. IV. p. 554.

It is hardly to be accounted for, how any one of the Clergy, at that Time, could honestly conform. For my Part, I solemnly protest, it is, and often has been, a Matter of Wonder to me, that every conscientious Minister in *England* was not, by the Act of Uniformity, made a Non-conformist.—*Robinson on Liturgies*, p. 405.

A Man of Note at that Time, made this just and awful Remark: “Had all the Ministers conformed, People
“ would have thought there was nothing in Religion, and
“ that it was only a Thing to be talk'd of in the Pulpit, and
“ to serve a State Design, while the Ministers turned and
“ changed any way with the State; but these 2000 Men
“ giving up their Livings, and exposing themselves and
“ Families to outward Evils, rather than conform to Things
“ imposed, not agreeable (as they apprehended) to the Gos-
“ pel they preached, has convinced Men there is a Reality
“ in Religion, and given a Check to Atheism.”—*Dr. Calamy's Abridg.* p. 183. See also the Q. between the Con-
formist and Non-conformist stated, p. 1.

About

chusing to sacrifice their Livings rather than their Consciences ; and making Truth and Right the Rule of their Actions, in Preference to a worldly Interest ?

A. Yes, certainly ; and as they will always be remembered with Honour, by those who esteem Uprightness and a Concern for the Honour of Christ, by which they were indisputably influenced, so they had the Encouragement of their Lord's Promises to support them under the

About 2000 Ministers chose to part with their Livings, rather than injure their Consciences ; nor do I believe that any where in History, an equal Number of Clergymen, voluntarily leaving their All for a good Conscience, can be produced. And this *Bartholomew-day*, famous before for the horrid Massacre of the Martyrs in *France*, was now made so by the Sufferings of the *English* Confessors.—*Pierce's Vindic.* p. 232.

For these Cruelties the Earl of *Castlemain*, a Papist, severely upbraids the Church of *England*, in these Words, “ It was never known that *Rome* persecuted (as the Bishops do) those who adhere to the same Faith with themselves, “ and established an Inquisition against the Professors of the “ strictest Piety amongst themselves.” And however the Prelates complain of the bloody Persecution under *Queen Mary*, it is manifest their Persecution exceeded it : For under her there were not above 2 or 300 put to death ; whereas, under their Persecutions, there have been above treble that Number, stifled, destroyed, and ruined in their Estates, Lives, and Liberties ; being (as is very remarkable) Men, for the most part, of the same Spirit and Principle with those Protestants who suffered under the Prelates in *Queen Mary's* Time.—*Pierce*, p. 259.

Dr. Henry Sampson, in his MS. History of Non-conformity, reckons up ten Persecutions against Protestant Dissenters, by the Church of *England*, from the Beginning of *Queen Elizabeth's* Reign to the Revolution by *King William*. —*Dr. Calamy's* Abridg. Pref.

Persecution they sustained: *Mat. x. 22, 32, 39. Ibid. xix. 28, 29.*

Q. Does not that Act of Uniformity settle the Terms of Ministerial and Lay Conformity required at this Day?

A. Yes.

CH A P. II.

The Hardships of Ministerial Conformity to the Church of *England*.

A N D

The Obligations both Clergy and Laity are under to endeavour to have them removed.

In Four SECTIONS.

Q. ARE there not Reasons sufficient to justify the dissenting Ministers not entering into the Church, and taking Orders according to the established Form?

A. Yes.

Q. What are they?

A. The very Day they enter into the Church, they must,

1st, Renounce their former Ordination and become Laymen, by submitting to be re-ordained.

2. Re-

2. Renounce their own Understandings, or Liberty of judging according to the Evidence appearing to them on strict impartial Enquiry, by subscribing the 39 Articles, as a Rule of their Faith.

3. Surrender up the Pastoral Office, and the Liberty of acting in the Discharge of it according to their own Judgment and Conscience, Scripturally informed, by swearing Canonical Obedience.

4. Renounce Scripture Truth, with their own and their People's Rights, by declaring their unfeigned Assent and Consent, to every Thing in the Book of Articles, Common-Prayer, and Ordination-Office, as agreeable to the Word of God.

S E C T. I.

Q. WHICH is the first Hardship attending dissenting Ministers Conformity, as Ministers, to the Church of England?

A. The dissenting Ministers, who have been before ordained, must virtually renounce that Ordination, by being ordained over again^r.

Q. But

^r A formal renouncing of the former Ordination was insisted on by the Bishop of *Chester*.—See a Copy of such Renunciation in *Calamy's Abridg.* p. 199.

By the Act of Uniformity no Incumbent, who was not in Orders by Episcopal Ordination, could enjoy his Benefice, but was *ipso facto* deprived. And the Practice of the Church is conformable to this Clause in the Act.

The

Q. But where is the Evil of this?

A. The Evil is greater or less, according to the Idea formed of Ordination. In case Ordination be considered, by the Ordainer and the Party ordained, as no more than solemn Prayers offered up to God, for the Success of a Person's Ministry, with laying on of Hands (as an Apostolic Rite) to designate the Person recommended to God for his Blessing; there would be little Room for Objection to Re-ordination, upon a Person's Removal to any new Station in the Church. But if Ordination be a solemn Investiture, or Introduction into a sacred Office, it seems absurd, to make the same Office have two Beginnings. And it may be construed a Lying to God and the Church, for a Man to disown his former Ministerial Character, and to confess himself a mere Layman, who had usurped the sacred Office, without proper Qualifications or Authority. Farther, it is not only an Absurdity, but a profane playing with holy Things, for a Man to profess to be moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon him the Office

The 67th Apostolic Canon decrees, that if any Bishop, Presbyter, or Deacon, be ordained by any one a second Time, the Ordained and the Ordainer shall both be deposed.—

Hickman's Apology, p. 17.

They might as well be rebaptized as re-ordained, it is in effect to acknowledge they have been hitherto Usurpers, and to invalidate all their former Ministrations; for, by the Collect, they are now called to the Office of Priesthood in the Church of God, not the Church of England.—*Taylor's Answer to Sherlock of Ch. Com. p. 104.*

of a Deacon, who is conscious that he is already in a higher and nobler Office. And it is another Absurdity, to ordain a Man to the Office of a Deacon, who is never intended to do the Work of a Deacon, serving Tables, but the Work of a Bishop, to teach and watch over Souls.

But if Ordination imply, and, as amongst the Dissenters, is usually accompanied with a solemn Contract with God, to serve him in preaching the Gospel of his Son; or the solemn Dedication of a Man's Self to Jesus Christ, as a Minister in his Kingdom; then, by being ordained over again, do they not deny their former Contract and Dedication, as if they had never entered into that Office?

Q. But, if their first Ordination was irregular and invalid, is it not necessary they be re-ordained?

A. Ordinations amongst the Dissenters are certainly as regular and as valid as any Ordinations in the Christian Church.

Q. What is the Form and Manner of Ordination amongst Dissenters?

A. Senior Pastors require sufficient Testimonials of the good Behaviour of those who offer themselves as Candidates for the Ministry; they examine them in the Languages, Philosophy, and Divinity; then, after some Time of Trial, at their own and the People's Request, they appoint a Time for their Ordination; when, the People being assembled, one Minister begins with begging a Blessing on the Work of the Day, and reading a suitable Portion of Scripture;
after

after which a Psalm is sung; then another Minister prays at large; a third describes the Ministerial Character and Duty in a Sermon; a fourth addresseth himself to the Candidate, desires an Account of his Faith, and his Views in entering upon the sacred Office, and requires his solemn Engagement to Diligence in the Discharge of it; then one of the senior Ministers recommends him to God in Prayer, with the Imposition of his own and his Brethren's Hands; after which an Exhortation is given to the ordained Minister; and the whole Service is concluded with singing of Psalms and a Thanksgiving Prayer.

Q. Is not Ordination by a College of Scripture Bishops, or by the laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery, as valid, and more solemn, regular, and honourable, than Ordination performed (comparatively) in private, by a single State Bishop?

A. Yes: For thus Timothy was ordained.
1 Tim. iv. 14. ^s

Q. What Absurdity and Inconvenience would follow the Principle of appropriating the Right of Ordination to twenty-four State Bishops in England?

A. It would be maintaining an unwarrantable Claim, founded neither on Scripture Precept

^s *Note,* Some take Presbyters (or Elders) not for any distinct Order of Ministers in the Christian Church, but for early Converts, or Christians of a longer standing than others; from amongst whom some were ordained Deacons, others Bishops or Pastors.

or Example, but apparently different from both ; it would open a Door to gross Corruption in the Church, seeing it is far from an impossible Supposition, that Bishops may be Enemies to real Holiness, formal, zealous for such external burdensom Rites, as are injurious to the Power of Godliness, and so may commit the Administration of Gospel Ordinances to Persons altogether unqualified for so important a Trust ; and it implies a Condemnation of the Pastors of foreign Protestant Churches as Usurpers of the sacred Office, and of their Flocks, as no true Christian Churches ; nor does it seem so conformable to the 23d Article of the Church of *England*, as Ordination on the Dissenter's Principles.

Q. If it appears to be God's Will, that such and such Men be Ministers, is not their Ordination valid ; or, are they not true Ministers ?

A. Yes : For none can have a Right to oppose those whom God appoints and allows of.

Q. How does it appear to be God's Will, that Persons dissenting from the Church of England, and ordained, not by diocesan Bishops, or according to the Form appointed by the State, may be Ministers in the Christian Church ?

A. By their being qualified for the Office ; called to it by the People ; devoting themselves thereto ; being approved and set apart by senior Pastors ; by the laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery, in Conformity with the Apostolical Practice ; and by being succeeded and blessed of God in their Ministrations.

Q. Was

24 *The Protestant Dissenters Catechism.*

Q. Was this Ordination valid in the primitive Church?

A. Yes^u.

Q. Is it not equally valid now?

A. Yes.

Q. Does it not appear difficult to reconcile it with a good Conscience, for a Man to renounce an Ordination he believes valid, and to divest himself of a sacred Office with which he judges he was regularly invested?

A. Yes.

Q. In this View of the Case, is not insisting upon Re-ordination a very culpable Imposition, and requiring an arbitrary Condition of Ministerial Conformity and Communion?

A. Yes.

Q. Ought not then every Man, Clergy and Laity, to protest against such an unjust Claim of Authority, and such an Hardship put upon Ministers?

A. Yes.

S E C T. II.

Q. WHICH is the second Hardship attending Ministerial Conformity to the Church of England?

A. That Ministers are obliged to renounce their own Understandings, and their Right of believing and judging upon Evidence in reli-

^u See Owen's Plea for Scripture Ordination.

gious Matters, by subscribing the Thirty-nine Articles *.

Q. Have not Subscriptions to human Articles of Faith been the Plague and Shame of the Church, and an Engine of Division and Contention ever since the Council of Nice?

A. Yes.

Q. Have any Magistrates or Bishops Authority from GOD and JESUS CHRIST, to draw up, in their own Words, Articles of Religion, to impose them upon their Fellow-Christians, and to punish them, or cast them out of the Church, for not subscribing them?

A. No, nothing like it.

Q. What is the Crime of acting in this Manner?

A. It is in effect usurping a regal Authority in Christ's own Kingdom; and exercising a Tyranny over their Fellow-Subjects.

Q. Has not Jesus Christ, by his own Mouth, and by his Spirit in the Apostles, given us all needful Articles of Faith?

A. Yes: Otherwise Christ had not been faithful, as a Son, over his Father's House.

Q. Moreover, are not the Articles of Faith, drawn up in Words which the holy Spirit suggested, as intelligible and determinate, as those drawn up in Words which Man's Wisdom teacheth; nay,

* See the Act of Uniformity, and Canon the 36th. Nothing has caused more Mischief in the Church, than establishing new and many Articles of Faith; and requiring all to assent to them. Bishop Croft's Naked Truth, p. 2.

16 *The Protestant Dissenters Catechism.*

which perhaps are owing to Ignorance of divine Truth, to worldly Principles, or fiery Zeal?

A. Yes.

Q. And is not he a sound Christian who believeth these Scriptural Articles, and endeavours to live accordingly?

A. Yes.

Q. Is not Faith in the holy Scriptures sufficient also for a Minister, without Faith in Articles of Men's composing?

A. Yes.

Q. Farther, has any Man Power over his own Understanding and Faith, to see whatever his Superiors require him to see, and to believe whatever they require him to believe?

A. No.

Q. What then shall we say of requiring this Subscription?

A. It is requiring an unjustifiable, and, as to many good Christians and faithful Ministers, an impossible Task; that is, such as cannot be performed consistently with a good Conscience.

Q. And what is like to be the Effect of annexing Church Preferments to such Subscriptions?

A. It is laying a Snare for Souls, by furnishing a strong Temptation to the vilest Dissimulation with God and Man, it discourages the Pursuit of sacred Knowledge, the Exercise of the Understanding in judging of divine Truths, and is therefore the sure Way to fill the Church with a Set of ignorant or wicked Ministers.

Q. Con-

Q. Consequently, must it not keep diligent, inquisitive, and conscientious Ministers out of the Church?

A. Yes: For worldly Hypocrites and lazy Drones will subscribe any thing for Preferment and Gain; while good Men dare not sin against Conscience, nor accept the Glory of this World on shameful Conditions.

Q. Do the Ministers in the Church of England believe the Truth of those Articles they have subscribed as true?

A. We may suppose that several of them do; but, on the other hand, if we may judge by their Writings, Sermons, and Conversation, many of them do not.

Q. By what Name shall we call Men's subscribing as their Faith, what they do not believe?

A. It scarce deserves a softer Name than Lying to God and to the World.

Q. What can be said for Men who violate Conscience, and make a Sacrifice of Truth, for the sake of worldly Gain?

A. It cannot be justified or excused.

Q. Then is it not the Duty of every Clergyman, as the Ecclesiastical Establishment is circumstantiated, to be a Dissenter, in this Respect, and refuse such arbitrary, unjust, and tyrannical Subscription?

A. Yes.

Q. And is it not the Duty of every Layman to be a Dissenter, and take part with conscientious Ministers, in declaring against such an
D 2 *usurped*

usurped Authority, and Invasion of the Rights of Men's Understandings and Consciences?

A. Yes y.

SECT.

y Requiring this Subscription is inconsistent with the sixth Article.

That the Church should have a Power delegated by Christ of decreeing Rites and Ceremonies, and binding the Consciences of Men to the Observation of them, according to the XXth Article of Religion, is a Point not easily to be granted by a considerate Man. How liable such a Trust is to be abused, how likely, is obvious to every one that will reflect impartially, or look about, and see what the usurped Exercise thereof has produced in the Church of Rome and elsewhere. Can it be imagined, that the Head of the Church, the Spouse of it, perfectly wise and good, and so concerned for the Purity and Perfection thereof, would confer an Authority on any of his Servants therein, which there was such a Probability of their employing to corrupt it, and which could not be exerted to any valuable Purpose. Nay, how many Extravagancies must necessarily be the Fruit of such a Constitution, left to the Management of sinful, fallible Men! And can a Constitution naturally tending to so ungodly an Issue be a *Divine Appointment*? One would think the Supposition too absurd to be entertained or defended by any, but those who had renounced their Understandings, or preferred their Interests in this World to the Concernments of a better.

There is no more Foundation for, there are the same Objections to, "the Church's Authority in Controversies of Faith." Surely she cannot expect our Submission to such a Claim, without a clear Proof of its Validity; which I cannot find the Writers on her Side have ever been able to produce. Indeed the Pretension is not only without any Ground, as it is unreasonable to suppose such a Trust should be committed by our Saviour to any fallible Men; but (which methinks should immediately decide the Question with all Christians) our Lord has expressly forbidden his

Dis-

S E C T. III.

Q. *WHICH is the Third Hardship imposed on Ministers in the Church of England?*

A. *They*

Disciples to assume or exert any such Jurisdiction; MATTH. XX. 25. *The Princes of the Gentiles exercise Dominion over them,——but it shall not be so among you.* MATTH. XXIII. 7, 8—12. *One is your Master, even CHRIST, and all ye are Brethren.* The great Apostle St. Paul, who was so much employed in settling the Churches, and in giving Directions about the Constitution and Discipline thereof, disclaims any such Authority, 2 COR. I. 24. *Not (says he) that we have Dominion over your Faith.——* How vain then is the Presumption of those that, in after Ages, arrogate to themselves such a Power, for which they can find no Warrant in the Charter of all spiritual Privileges, the Gospel of our Saviour! I believe but few, even of the most zealous Advocates for this Authority in the Church, are willing to allow it to that of *Rome* or of *Scotland*. No;—it is that of *England* only, which they will invest with this Prerogative over Conscience, this Right of imposing Creeds, and enacting Ceremonies.——But, pray, in what Part, in what Division of the Church of *England*, will they have this interesting Power to reside? for truly a Man can hardly pay a rational Obedience to an Authority which he does not know the Seat of. Is it in the King's most excellent Majesty,—who is, on Earth, by Law, supreme Head and Governor of the Church of this Realm, in all spiritual and ecclesiastical Things and Causes? Or, is it lodged in the Parliament,—the only Law-Makers, so far as I know, of the *English* Church, the only spiritual Rulers, the real Bishops thereof? Or, is it in a Convocation of the Clergy,—who cannot convene, but by virtue of a royal Writ, nor, when convened, debate any Point of Doctrine, but with the King's Leave, nor make one binding

A. They are obliged to promise and swear Obedience to the Bishops and Ordinary according to the Canons.

Q. Did JESUS CHRIST establish this Dominion of some of his Servants and Ministers over others?

A. No: He expressly forbid it, in this plain and awful Language. “ The Princes of the
 “ Gentiles exercise Dominion over them, and
 “ they who are great exercise Authority upon
 “ them: But it shall not be so amongst you;
 “ but whosoever will be great amongst you,
 “ let him be your Minister, and whosoever
 “ will be chief amongst you, let him be your
 “ Servant: Even as the Son of Man came not

Canon? Or, does it exist in every single Clergyman,—— who is so far from having any Authority to frame Articles, or decree Ceremonies, that he is bound, by Subscriptions and Oaths, to believe and practise those already made to his Hand? Or, finally, is it in every single Church, (as a Church is defined in Article XIX.) according to the XXXIVth Article;——for then the dissenting Churches have a fair Title to this Power, and may, as they see fit, cancel and abolish the Articles and Ceremonies of the Church of *England*, and, with equal Right, impose different ones of their own?——But it is not the Seat of this Authority only that should be determined, its Extent or Measure also should be exactly defined. Has the Church an unlimited Commission to enjoin as many Ceremonies and coin what Articles of Faith she pleases; or are the Kind and Number of each specified in her Patent? These and the foregoing Queries we have certainly a Right to offer; and if they cannot be resolved, on the Church's Side, to the Satisfaction of sincere and careful Enquirers, all her Pretence to the Claims in Dispute should be honestly relinquished.

“ to be ministred unto, but to minister, and
“ to give his Life a Ransom for many.”
*Matth. xx. 25, 28. Mark x. 42, 45. Luke
xxii. 24, 27.*

*Q. Is it not a tremendous Insult on the Authority
of the Son of God, our Lord, and our Judge, so
directly to counteract his Orders, by subjecting some
Ministers to the Will of others?*

A. Yes.

*Q. What! did he so warmly check the least
Appearance of such a Spirit of Domination a-
mongst his Disciples whilst he was present, and
shall their Successors dare to assert it as his In-
stitution; can there be a more presumptuous
giving him the Lye than such a Pretence or such
a Conduct?*

A. No.

*Q. Are all the Ministers of Jesus Christ Fellow-
Servants under one Lord and Master?*

*A. Yes: “ One is your Master, and all ye
“ are Brethren.” Matth. xxiii. 8, 12.*

*Q. If this Oath of Obedience is an Anti-
christian Dominion on the one hand, and a sinful
Compliance on the other, ought not every Minister
to refuse it?*

A. Yes.

*Q. And ought not every Christian to declare
against it?*

*A. Yes: And dissent rather than submit to
such an unreasonable Yoke.*

*Q. What is the Question put to Priests and
Deacons at their Ordination?*

A. "Will you reverently obey your Ordinary, and other chief Ministers, to whom is committed the Charge and Government over you; following with a glad Mind and Will their godly Admonitions, and submitting yourselves to their godly Judgments."

Q. *What is their Answer?*

A. "I will do so, the Lord being my Help."

Q. *What is the Oath imposed on Ministers?*

A. "I A. B. swear, that I will perform true and canonical Obedience to the Bishop of N. and his Successors, in all lawful and honest Things^z."

Q. *What Oath of Obedience do the Bishops take?*

A. "In the Name of God, Amen. J. N. chosen Bishop of the Church and See of N. profess and promise all due Reverence and Obedience to the Archbishop, and to the

^z Canonical Obedience is Obedience according to the Canons, and ought to be considered as such, till it shall, by sufficient Authority, be declared how far the Canons are in force; or how far taking the Oaths obliges to obey them. See *Cal. Abridgment*, Vol. II. p. 462, &c.

In King William's Ecclesiastical Commission he says, "The Book of Canons is fit to be reviewed and made more suitable to the State of the Church." Which implies; they were then the Church Laws. *Cal. Abridgment*, p. 446.

When a Bishop admonishes a scrupulous Minister to read the *Athanasian Creed*, the Incumbent must consider this as a godly Admonition, and accordingly obey it.

"Me-

“Metropolitan Church of N. and to their Successors. So help me God, through JESUS CHRIST.”

Q. Are they not a sort of blind and rash Oaths, when Men swear Reverence and Obedience to the Successors of Bishops and Ordinaries, though they know not who or what manner of Persons they will be?

A. Yes.

Q. Do those Limitations of—Things lawful and honest, godly Admonitions, due Obedience, much help the Matter?

A. No: For as Obedience has relation to Law, and the Canons are the Laws of the Church, it is the natural and general Interpretation, that this is swearing Obedience to the Canons; and is therefore called canonical Obedience.

Q. And is it not supposed that Obedience according to the Canons is lawful and honest?

A. Yes.

Q. Is not a Lay Chancellor often the Ordinary in a Diocese?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it not most unsuitable for Christian Ministers to swear Obedience to Laymen, in the Exercise of their pastoral Office; and to absolve or excommunicate just as (for Money) those Lay-Chancellors shall decree?

A. Yes.

Q. But whether it be to Bishops or Laymen that Ministers promise and swear canonical Obedience,

dience, is not such a Promise and Oath a virtual renouncing of the pastoral Office; and a renouncing of it at the very Time they are pretended to be invested therein?

A. Yes.

Q. Does not this look something like a mocking of God, and a playing fast and loose in divine Things?

A. Yes^a.

Q. How many Bishops are there in the Church of England?

A. Only twenty-four, besides the two Archbishops.

Q. What are the rest of the Clergy?

A. They are only Curates^b.

Q. But is this Branch of the Ecclesiastical Constitution conformable to the Laws of Christ, or likely to promote the Holiness and Salvation of the Flock?

A. No: It is inconsistent with the Gospel, with Reason, and with primitive Antiquity.

Q. Who are Bishops and Pastors, in the Scripture Sense, according to the Dictates of Reason, and the Custom of the Church for the first 300 Years?

A. The Ministers of single Congregations, who feed the Flock committed to them, and

^a See *Bax. Nonconf. stated*, &c. p. 40.

^b Upon this Principle, at the Reformation, *Pastors* were blotted out of the Common Prayer, and Curate or Priest put instead of it, importing that Bishops were the only Pastors. *Plain-Dealing*, p. 12.

watch over them as those who must give an Account ^c.

Q. Are not then Parish-Ministers, who attend their proper Duty, the true Scripture primitive Bishops?

A. Yes.

Q. And of what Extent were the primitive Diocesses?

A. No larger than our Parishes.

Q. Is it not then a very unjustifiable Encroachment, to deprive Christian Ministers of the pastoral Office, and to degrade them into Curates?

A. Yes.

Q. And while this very exceptionable Branch of the Constitution subsists, will it not justify the Dissent both of Clergy and Laity?

A. Yes.

Q. What are the particular Hardships the Ministers of the Church of England are subject to by their Oath of canonical Obedience, and by their Ordination Promise to obey their Ordinary and other chief Ministers?

A. They are such as are expressed in several particular Canons ^d.

^c See the Enquiry into the Constitution, Discipline, Unity and Worship of the primitive Church, Part I. chap. 2.

^d They who impose any Terms of Communion upon either Ministers or People, are bound to give a full and clear Account of these three Things. 1. The Lawfulness of the Things imposed. 2. The Usefulness of them. 3. Their own Authority to impose them. *Pierce's Confid. Pref.*

The First Canonical Hardship.

Q. To what Hardship are Ministers obliged by the fourth Canon?

A. To publish the Sentence of Excommunication against all such as affirm there is any thing in the COMMON-PRAYER repugnant to the Scriptures, whenever the Ordinary requires them to do it.

Q. Are there not Thousands of good Christians who believe there are several Things in that Book repugnant to the Scriptures?

A. Yes.

Q. If they believe it, ought they not to have Liberty of declaring it?

A. Yes, sure.

Q. Can that be a righteous and charitable Canon, which thus cuts off from the Church, and pronounces accursed, many good and excellent Christians, whom Christ will own as his Servants?

A. No.

Q. Must it not then touch the Conscience of an upright Minister to have any Hand in such Unchristian Excommunications?

A. Yes, surely.

Q. Ought any Minister to swear Obedience to such a Canon?

A. No.

Q. Does it become fallible and uninspired Men, to claim such a Prerogative for any Book of that Bulk,

Bulk, and of so complex a Nature as the Common-Prayer is?

A. No.

The Second Canonical Hardship.

Q. To what Hardship are Ministers obliged by the fifth Canon?

A. To publish a Sentence of Excommunication, when required by the Ordinary, against any who shall affirm, that any Part of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England is superstitious and erroneous.

Q. Yet do not a very considerable (if not much the greater) Part of the Clergy believe many of those Articles to be erroneous?

A. There is the utmost Reason to apprehend they do.

Q. Are not they then, if they speak or write according to their real Opinion, in a State of Excommunication by their own Canon?

A. Yes.

Q. And if the Courts should proceed against them, would not the Clergy all over the Kingdom be publishing Excommunications and Curses against one another?

A. Yes: If the Church of England acted according to her own Canons, she would be miserably divided in a short Time.

Q. Is not the Privilege and Perfection they claim for the Articles greater than is really due

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to an English Bible, or to any other Translation of even God's own Word?

A. Yes; and therefore evidently exorbitant.

Q. Ought not then Clergy and Laity to unite, in endeavouring the Abolition of such a Canon, and to be Dissenters till it is effected?

A. Yes.

The Third Canonical Hardship.

Q. Under what Hardship do Ministers lie by the sixth Canon?

A. When called to it by the Ordinary, they are to publish a Sentence of Excommunication against all who affirm that any of the Rites and Ceremonies in the Church are superstitious, &c.

Q. Yet are there not Multitudes of wise and good Men who believe, and do affirm, that bowing at the Name of Jesus, the Use of the Cross in Baptism, and other Practices in the Church of England, are superstitious?

A. Yes.

Q. And is the believing and affirming these Practices in the Worship of God to be superstitious, which were confessedly never enjoined by divine Authority, a Crime that deserves Excommunication, or a cutting off from the Church of Christ?

A. No, surely.

Q. Suppose these wise and good Men mistaken, yet, is their Mistake to be more grievously punished

nished than Swearing, Drunkenness, or Sabbath-breaking?

A. No.

Q. Are wicked Men (called Dogs and Swine) to be let into the Church, while God's Children, who dissent from these Things merely for fear of displeasing their heavenly Father and Saviour, are shut out of it?

A. No, it ought not to be so.

Q. Are any such Canons to be found amongst the Laws of Christ and his Apostles?

A. No, none like them.

Q. What is the Duty of Ministers and People in this Case?

A. To labour for the abolishing such a Canon, and to profess their Dissent till it be done.

The Fourth Canonical Hardship.

Q. To what Hardship doth the seventh Canon expose Ministers?

A. They are obliged thereby, when it is issued out of Court, to publish the Sentence of Excommunication against all who affirm, that the Government of the Church by Archbishops, Bishops, Deans, Archdeacons, and the rest who bear Office in the same, is Antichristian, or repugnant to the Word of God.

Q. How far may that Clause, the rest who bear Office, be extended?

A. To all Officers in the Chancellor's Court, in the Court of Arches, and the Prerogative Court,

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Court, to Commissaries, Officials, Surrogates, Proctors, Apparitors, &c.

Q. Well, and did Jesus Christ institute any such Government in his Kingdom?

A. No, nothing like it.

Q. Is Church Government, by such a Set of Officers, consistent with the Government and Discipline instituted by Christ, or by his Spirit in the Apostles?

A. No.

Q. If it be not of Christ, nor consistent with the Purpose of his Institution, what is it?

A. There is, alas! but too much Reason, for pronouncing it Antichristian.

Q. Is it then a great Sin, deserving Excommunication, to call it so, or to say, it is repugnant to God's Word?

A. No; it is only uttering a plain and useful Truth, and what, strictly speaking, we are in Duty bound to say; provided, in bearing our Testimony, we carefully avoid either Wrath or Rudeness.

Q. Should Christian Ministers concur, in excommunicating good Men, for that which is not a Crime, but rather a laudable Duty?

A. No.

Q. What is the Nature of such Excommunications?

A. It is a cursing of many whom God has blessed, and schismatically cutting off from the Church such as Christ hath received into his Kingdom.

Q. What

Q. What then is the Duty both of Ministers and People?

A. To join the Dissenters in pleading for and endeavouring a Repeal of such Canons^e.

The Fifth Canonical Hardship.

Q. To what Hardship are the Clergy exposed by the ninth, tenth, and eleventh Canons?

A. They are to publish Sentences of Excommunication, when issued out, against all who affirm, that the Congregations of Protestant Dissenters are true Churches.

Q. But are they not true Churches, by the Definition of a true Church in the nineteenth Article of the Church of England?

A. Yes.

Q. Moreover, have not Dissenting Congregations some Marks of true Churches, which the Congregations in the Establishment want?

A. Yes.

Q. What are some of those Marks?

A. Liberty of chusing their own Bishops and Pastors, and of refusing unqualified Members, or of excluding them from Communion; Sacraments uncorrupted by Mixture of human Rites; free Prayer; and a Discipline better adapted to answer the Intention of our blessed Saviour's Institution, which is to preserve from Sin, to promote Holiness in Men, and to qualify them for everlasting Felicity.

e The like Objections lie against the eighth Canon.

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Q. Have not then the Dissenting Congregations rather a better Title to the Character of true Churches, than those of the Establishment?

A. Yes.

Q. What sort of Canons then must they be, which excommunicate those who maintain, that the Congregations of Dissenters, qualified as above-said, are true Churches?

A. They are certainly not agreeable to the Truth of the Case, and the reverse of that brotherly Kindness and Charity which should govern in all the Professors of Christianity.

Q. May it not be said, that, according to these Canons, Christ has not a true Church in the World?

A. Yes, verily; for since none have a better Title to the Character of true Churches than the Congregations of Dissenters, if they, who have indeed the best Title, are said by these Canons to have none, surely those who have only a worse cannot reasonably be said to have any; and so, by Implication, Christ is left without any Church at all.

Q. Had not a Christian Minister better suffer the greatest temporal Inconveniency, than pronounce such Excommunication?

A. Yes.

Q. Does not the Wisdom and Moderation of the Church afford Ground to hope that the Clergy will not be put upon this Hardship?

A. Yes, we apprehend it does.

Q. Yet,

Q. Yet, what is the Duty, notwithstanding, both of Clergy and Laity?

A. To be Dissenters, till a Door is legally opened into the Church, clear of those Embarrassments and Obstructions which now prevent the most pious from entering it.

The Sixth Canonical Hardship.

Q. What are the Hardships brought on the Clergy by the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth Canons?

A. They are forbid to administer the Lord's Supper to any but those who kneel; or to any Christians coming from other Parishes.

Q. Does Christ require us to kneel at the receiving of his Supper?

A. No.

Q. Have any Men a Right to require and insist on this Gesture?

A. No.

Q. Do not many wise and good Christians scruple kneeling at the Sacrament?

A. Yes.

Q. Upon what Accounts?

A. Because it is not only without the least Warrant from any Circumstance of the original Institution, and disagreeing with the Custom of the Church in the first and purest Ages, but is an unjustifiable Conformity with the

† Enquiry into the Constit. &c. Part II. ch. 6.

Romanists, § in a Usage that certainly favours their absurd Doctrine of Transubstantiation, whether introduced for that Purpose or not, and is practised by them in an Act of the grossest Idolatry, the worshipping of a Wafer as the very Lord and Saviour of the World; moreover, it is a Posture absolutely unsuitable to the very Nature and Design of the Ordinance, which is a Communion of Christians, and a Feasting with Christ: Nor is that of sitting, preferred by the Dissenters, in the least derogatory from the deepest Sense of the inestimable Value of what we receive at the Lord's Table, or with a becoming Humility and Gratitude in those who are admitted thereunto.

Q. Ought those Christians, who, for these and other good Reasons, scruple kneeling, to be excluded from the Table of their Lord, and denied the Bread of Life?

A. By no means.

Q. What is the Crime of refusing the Lord's Supper to all except Kneelers?

A. It is a most presumptuous erecting a Lordship in the Church of Christ; making new Laws in his Kingdom; breaking the Church into

§ The famous M. *Voltaire*, when in *England* some Years since, had the Curiosity to see the Lord's Supper administered in a Parish Church; and being asked, how he liked it, he replied, "Your Priests are as great Rogues as ours, for they make the People worship the Bread." Letter from Mr. *Amory* of *Taunton*.

Parties ; and an unrighteous denying the Servants of Christ, and their Fellow-Servants, their unquestionable Rights.

Q. Can Ministers be justified in thus treating their Fellow Servants, or in binding themselves by Promise or Oath to do it ?

A. No : The Clergy had better quit their Benefices, and turn Dissenters, than obey, or swear to obey, so unchristian and schismatical a Canon ; for it is better to suffer than to sin ^h.

Q. Then, in case an ignorant or vicious Man be a Minister in one Parish, and a Parishioner there, for his spiritual Advantage, chuse to communicate with an unexceptionable Minister in a neighbouring Parish, is it not a manifest Injury to that Christian to refuse him the desired Communion ?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it not also a great Hardship upon that Minister to be obliged to refuse the Administration of this Ordinance, to those who would chuse, for the Reason aforesaid, to receive it at his Hands ?

A. Yes : Ministers had better dissent, than put on such Shackles, and submit to such a Yoke ⁱ.

^h See the Communion Office.

ⁱ See a like Hardship by Canon 57th.

The Seventh Canonical Hardship.

Q. What Hardship is put on Ministers by the thirty-eighth Canon?

A. It obliges them, in Obedience to the Ordinary, to read the Sentence of Excommunication, against all Ministers who repent of subscribing the Articles mentioned Canon thirty-sixth.

Q. Is it not a Sin to subscribe, as a divine Truth, what the Subscriber believes to be otherwise?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it not a Duty to repent of Sin?

A. Yes.

Q. And should Men be excommunicated for repenting of Sin, and doing what they consider as a Duty?

A. No.

Q. What is like to be the Effect of such Canons and such Excommunication?

A. Bringing into the Church, and keeping therein, Men of no Conscience, and shutting conscientious Men out of it.

Q. Had not the Clergy better be Dissenters, and refuse all insnaring Subscriptions, that they may keep their Consciences inviolate, and have no Occasion for Repentance?

A. Yes.

The Eighth Canonical Hardship.

Q. What Hardship is put upon Ministers by the fifty-eighth Canon?

A. It requires them to wear a Surplice in their Ministrations^k.

Q. Is it becoming an Assembly of learned and grave Divines to employ themselves in framing a Canon about a Surplice?

A. No.

Q. And is it not ridiculous to impose on the Clergy, as necessary in their solemn Ministrations, what is in its Nature indifferent, and apparently trifling?

A. Yes; it looks like a vain Attempt to change the Nature of Things; to render such as are of no Value important.

Q. Is it not worse, to impose Habits, Forms, Gestures, and the like Ceremonies, on those who dislike them as evil?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it not absurd also to oblige Ministers to change their Garments in the Time of divine Service, making thereby Distinctions between Ministrations, where God and Nature have made none?

A. Yes.

^k The usual Garb of Ministers, in their Ministrations in the primitive Church, was the *Pallium*, or Cloak. The *Surplice* is an apish Imitation of the Angels appearing in white. Enquiry, Part II. p. 23.

Q. Is

Q. Is not the Case still worse, when the Surplice and other Ceremonies are imposed as Symbols of Purity and Holiness, and People are led to pay a superstitious Reverence to consecrated Garments?

*A. Yes*¹.

Q. But is there any Holiness in a white Surplice?

A. No more than in a Pillar or Wall of that Colour.

Q. Ought not every thing, which is neither a Part of Religion nor a necessary Circumstance of it, to be kept out of the Church, rather than forced into it?

A. Yes.

Q. Are not giving Offence to good Men, and leading weak Men into a superstitious Reverence for indifferent Things, sufficient Reasons against all such imposing Canons?

A. Yes.

¹ It is said in the Preface to the *Common-Prayer*, that such Ceremonies are retained, which serve for decent Order and godly Discipline; and such as are apt to stir up the dull Mind of Man to the Remembrance of his Duty to God, by some notable and special Signification, whereby he may be edified.

In Conformity to this mystical Holiness of Ceremonies, a celebrated *Essex* Doctor would not suffer his worn-out Surplice to be profaned, by giving it to the Poor; but prevailed with his Parishioners to have it burned in a clean Place, the Ashes to be gathered up, put into an Urn, and buried under the Altar. *Hickman's Apologia*, p. 103.

Q. And

Q. And would it not better become the Clergy and Laity also, to turn Dissenters, than to countenance in the Church an imposing Spirit?

A. Yes.

The Ninth Canonical Hardship.

Q. Under what Hardships do Ministers lie by the seventy-second Canon^m?

A. Without a Licence from the Bishop, they must not so much as keep a private Fast, or be present at any, or at any Meetings for Conference and mutual Improvement, or so much as attempt to cast out the Devil, though he be ever so troublesome, frightful, and mischievous in the Parish.

Q. May not private Families, as also single Congregations, have plain and sudden Calls from God to Fasting and Prayer?

A. Yes, by the Plague, Fire, or other great Affliction.

Q. Is it their Duty to wait for the Lord Bishop's Licence, before they obey the Lord of Hosts?

A. No; it is neither necessary nor decent.

Q. Is Fasting and Prayer dangerous either to the Church or State?

A. No, certainly; but may be beneficial to both.

Q. If Christian Families (or Churches) desire their Minister's Assistance in carrying on the Work

^m As to Canon 68. see Sect. IV. about Baptism.

of a Fast-Day, ought he to refuse it, till he has Leave from the Bishop?

A. By no means, since he is under no Restriction from God, and has a providential Call thereunto.

Q. Have Bishops or Councils any Right to deprive Ministers of this Part of their pastoral Office, or the People, of the Privilege of praying to God, and humbling their Souls for Sin?

A. No.

Q. Is not such a Canon a cruel Attempt to shut up Men's Way to Heaven, and bar them from Access to God himself?

A. Yes.

Q. Moreover, is not that Man very unfit to be trusted with the Care of Souls, who cannot be trusted to fast and pray with his Neighbours?

A. Yes.

Q. Or, is it fit, or, indeed, morally possible, to acquaint Bishops with the secret Cases of every Family in their Diocese (which are perhaps ten or a hundred thousand) whom God calls to Fasting and Prayer?

A. No.

Q. Or, are Preaching and Conference such dangerous Works, that no Clergyman but Bishops are to be concerned therein without a Licence?

A. So it should seem.

Q. Does not such a Canon degrade the Abilities of the Clergy, and set them in a Light too contemptible for any to appear in, who are employed in sacred Offices?

A. Yes.

Q. Is

Q. Is not this Canon, against meeting to fast and pray, a Proof that the Church of England is the best constituted Church in the World?

A. A sad Proof indeed!

Q. Is not such a Canon a valid Ground of Dissent both to Clergy and Laity?

A. Yes.

The Tenth Canonical Hardship.

Q. What Hardships are imposed upon Ministers by the three last Canons, viz. the 139th, 140th, and 141st?

A. They are obliged, if required by the Ordinary, to read Sentences of Excommunication against such as affirm, that the Convocation is not the Church of England, by Representation; or, that they who absent from the Synod are not bound by its Decrees; or, that the Synod did conspire against godly Professors of the Gospel.

Q. Are not Protestant Dissenters a Part of the real Church of England, as also the conforming Laity in the said Church?

A. Yes, surely; unless the Church of England differs from the Church of Christ.

Q. Then, can Clergymen, not chosen by the Dissenters, nor deputed by the Laity in the Establishment, lawfully represent such as never chose them, approved them, or gave them any Instructions?

A. No.

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Q. Can then the Convocation be a true and proper Representation of the Church of England?

A. No; nothing like it.

Q. Can it then be a Sin, deserving Excommunication, to affirm it is not?

A. Noⁿ.

Q. Again, has Christ given the English Convocation Authority to make Laws and Canons for his Kingdom and Church, or for any Part of it?

A. No.

Q. Are not Representatives in Matters of Religion a Mystery and Absurdity?

A. Yes; for no Man can be authorized to frame Principles for other Men, to guide their Consciences, or determine their Practice.

Q. If any Men claim and usurp such Authority, are others bound in Conscience to obey them?

A. No; they are bound to oppose them in their Invasion of the Authority of Jesus Christ.

Q. And is it not to the Honour of such Opposers, that they appear for Christian Liberty, whoever attempts to infringe it?

A. Yes.

▪ The Convocation is so far from being the *Church of England*, representatively, that it is not a just and true Representative even of the Clergy thereof: There being but about 100 Members of the Lower House of Convocation to represent the Cathedral Clergy; and only 44 (or, according to Bishop Burnet, 38) to represent all the Parish Clergy in the Province of Canterbury, which takes in 22 of the 26 Dioceses, viz. 18 in England, and 4 in Wales. Present State of England. Robinson on Liturgies, p. 378.

Q. Again,

Q. Again, have not many godly Professors of the Gospel been excommunicated, imprisoned, plundered, murdered, for not obeying Church Canons?

A. Yes.

Q. May not the Makers and Executors of such Canons be reckoned Conspirators against real Christians, and consequently against Christ?

A. Yes.

Q. And do Men deserve to be shut out of the Church and ruined for only affirming these sad Truths?

A. No.

Q. Or ought Ministers to bind themselves by Promise or Oath to obey any Men in the Execution of such Canons?

A. No.

Q. Upon the whole, are not the 141 Canons of the Church of England a heavy Burden upon the Necks of Christ's Disciples, compared with the reasonable Yoke of God's Ten Commandments, or the gentle Yoke of Jesus Christ?

A. Yes; God's Government is both wiser and milder than that of Man.

° *Let us then fall into the Hands of JEHOVAH, for great are his Mercies, but let us not fall into the Hands of Men, for the tender Mercies of the Wicked are cruel, 1 Chron. xxi. 13. Prov. xii. 10.*

I dare boldly say, there is no Town of note in all England, but twelve Men may be chosen out of it, who would make Canons more to the Edification of all the Congregations in England, than those which Bishop Bancroft and his Clergy concluded. — Dr. Ames's Fresh Suit, Part II.

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Q. When Men set up for Law-makers in the Kingdom and Church of Christ, do they not always play the Fool, or act the Tyrant, by either ridiculous or unrighteous Canons, Articles, and Decrees?

A. Yes.

Q. Amongst these 141 Canons, which is the best, if not the almost only good one?

A. The 75th, the Tenor of which is, "That Ecclesiastical Persons shall not (without honest Necessity) resort to Taverns and Ale-houses; or give themselves to Drinking and Riot; spending their Time idly by Day or Night, playing at Dice, Cards, Tables, or any other unlawful Game:—That they ought to excel others in Purity of Life, and should be Examples to the People to live well."

Q. Would it not be a great Reproach to the Clergy, if the best Canon of the Church should be the worst observed?

A. Yes P.

Q. But since the Bulk of them are so trifling, so unreasonable and oppressive, should not Clergymen

Wicked Clergymen should consider, that they raise Prejudices in Men's Hearts, causing them to separate from holy Institutions, because dispensed by profane and scandalous Ministers. Let them pretend ever so high'y to Uniformity and Obedience; "Yet certainly these are the Men that have made all our Separatists, that rend our Church to pieces.—When the Sheep see the Wolf set over them, no wonder they run to other Pastures." Bishop Hopkin's Works, Folio, p. 166. or on the fifth Commandment.

dissent,

dissent, rather than execute or swear Obedience to such Canons?

A. Yes; and the Laity ought to join with them in a Dissent from all such Impositions.

S E C T. IV.

Q. *WHICH is the fourth general Hardship attending ministerial Conformity to the Church of England?*

A. That before they enter into the Church, as Clergymen, they must renounce Scripture TRUTH, with their own and the People's RIGHTS, by declaring their unfeigned Assent and Consent, that every thing in the Book of Articles, Common-Prayer, and Book of Ordination, is agreeable to the Word of God; that they approve of all the Orders contained in them, and will use no other Forms⁹.

Q. *Is it not great Presumption for fallible, imperfect, sinful Men, to require their Fellow-Servants to profess there are no Faults at all in*

⁹ Hickman calls it *Immanissima Tyrannis*, a most outrageous Tyranny.—Apolog. p. 23.

The Cruelty and Injustice was still more amazing upon the Clergy in 1662, who were required to make this Declaration concerning a Book they had never seen; for it came out about *Bartholomew-Eve*, and the Ministers must declare their Assent and Consent before *Bartholomew-Day*. So that it is amazing the whole Body of *English* Clergy were not silenced at that dreadful Day, or did not turn Dissenters.—*Robinson on Liturgies*, p. 391. See the *Act of Uniformity*, and *Canon* 36th.

so large a Book as the Common-Prayer, nor in two more Church-Books, Works of Men's Composition?

A. Yes.

Q. Does not this set the Liturgy, Articles, and Ordination-Book, on a Level with the Word of God?

A. Yes, and in some respect above it; for God does not require us to assent to every thing in the Bible, as necessary to Salvation, or to the Ministry.

Q. Ought either Ministers or People to declare such Assent and Consent, and hereby confederate with and encourage an haughty Lording it over the Souls and Faith of their Fellow-Christians?

A. No.

To pass over the Points already considered under SECTION II.

Q. Are there not several Things in that one Book, the Common-Prayer, which seem not agreeable to the Word of God?

A. Yes.

The First Fault or Error in the Common-Prayer.

Q. Which is the first Thing of that kind?

A. The Common-Prayer affirms, that it is certain, by the Word of God, that Children who
are

are baptized, and die before they commit actual Sin, are undoubtedly saved ^r.

Q. Is not this a new Doctrine, or Article of Faith?

A. Yes.

Q. Suppose it a dubious or questionable Point, is it not presumptuous to decide it so positively?

A. Yes.

Q. But has it any clear and certain Ground in God's Word?

A. No, none at all.

Q. Is it not then an intolerable Hardship, to oblige Ministers to affirm, that God's Word says, what it does not say?

A. Yes.

Q. What may be further objected to it?

A. That it is adding to the Word of God, as well as abusing the Servants of God.

Q. What Absurdity does this Doctrine imply?

A. It represents Baptism as a Charm, as if Water and Words could inspire Virtue, and qualify a Soul for Salvation.

Q. Consequently, has not this Doctrine a Tendency to delude Souls, by leading them to think a real Conversion unnecessary?

A. Yes ^s.

^r See the Rubric at the End of the Public Baptism, the Office of Confirmation, and the Thanksgiving-Prayer after Baptism.

^s A Minister of the Church of England at *Hastington*, in *Lancashire*, reading in Mr. *Allen's* Book of Conversion, said, "What does this silly Fellow talk so much about Conversion, were we not all converted by our Baptism?"

Q. But

Q. But does the outward Ceremony convert and save?

A. No; Baptism saves us (not the putting away the Filth of the Flesh, but the Answer of a good Conscience towards God) by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. iii. 21.

The Second Fault or Error in the Common-Prayer.

Q. What is the second Point in the Common-Prayer, which seems not agreeable to the Word of God?

A. The Use of Godfathers and Godmothers in Baptism.

Q. To what Objections is this Order and Practice liable?

A. To several.

The primitive Use of Sponsors was this: In the first Ages of Christianity, the Christians were persecuted, and many, through the Terrors of this World, forsook Christ; others died Martyrs, while their Children were in Infancy, and thereby exposed to Neglect, or to be brought up in Paganism; therefore, to secure such Orphans a Christian Education, Sponsors were joined with the Parents at the Baptism of Children, as their Seconds, testifying their good Opinion of the Parents at that Time, and promising, that if they apostatized, or died, they would undertake the Children's Education, if not then of Age. If the Parents were already dead, they took the Children as their own.

Against Sponsors in these and similar Cases the Dissenters have no Objection; though it does not appear they were used in the Time of the Apostles.—Enquiry, Part II. chap. 4.

OBJECTION I. Q. Which is the first Objection?

A. That Parents are not to be urged to be present at their Children's Baptism, nor admitted to answer for them, according to the 29th Canon.

Q. Have not Parents (or the Proprietors of Children) the sole Right to dispose of, dedicate to God, and to covenant in behalf of, their own Children?

A. Yesⁿ.

Q. Can it then be agreeable to the Word of God to deny Parents their unquestionable Rights?

A. I think, far from it.

Q. Should Ministers assent to the Truth and Justice of such a Law, and consent to practise upon it?

A. No, sure.

Q. Is it not an insufferable Hardship, to oblige Ministers to act in this manner, upon Pain of Suspension, Deprivation, and Loss of Livelihood?

A. Yes.

OBJECTION II. Q. What is the second Objection?

A. That, by Canons 68 and 69, Ministers cannot refuse any Children (though the Offspring

ⁿ *Parentes fidei Professionem edere debent, quia Fides est Conditio Enderis ex parte Parentum. Illi soli prastare possunt & debent quod sancte promittunt de Educatione & Institutione in Fide; quia soli habent Liberos in Potestate sua. Altare Damasc. p. 608. Edit. 1708.*

of *Jews, Mahometans, Heathens, or Atheists*) if brought to be baptized with Godfathers, &c.

Q. Is not this a notorious Abuse and Profanation of an Ordinance of Jesus Christ, to administer it to such as are out of the Christian Church, and who have none to bring them up in the Christian Faith?

A. Yes.

Q. And is it not a grievous Hardship to oblige Ministers to this, and to declare it also agreeable to the Word of God?

A. Yes.

OBJECTION III. *Q. What is the third Objection?*

A. That the Godfathers, &c. personate the Child without any proper Authority; and, in personating, make the Child to say several false Things, and so turn the holy Ordinance of Baptism into little less than an absurd and ridiculous Ceremony.

Q. What do the Godfathers say in the Person of the Child, or make the Child say?

A. They make it say, I renounce, I believe, I desire; when utterly incapable of these Acts.*

Q. Should

* The Questions put to the Child, in the Person of its Sponsors, are, *Dost thou forsake the Devil and all his Works, &c?* Answ. *I forsake them all.* *Dost thou believe in God the Father, &c?* Answ. *All this I steadfastly believe.* *Wilt thou be baptized?* Answ. *That is my Desire.* *Wilt thou obediently keep God's Commandments, &c?* Answ. *I will.* This is something like the odd Custom of the Marcionites, who, when their Catechumens died, would hide a Person under

Q. Should not Baptism, (one of the most important Transactions) as it is our first Dedication to God and a holy Life, be performed more rationally and solemnly?

A. Yes.

Q. Might not Ministers as properly baptize the Godfathers in the Child's Stead, as take these false Professions from them in its Stead?

A. Yes.

Q. Moreover, is not the Supposition of the Necessity of Faith and Consent in Children, a plain betraying the Cause of Infant Baptism, and a giving it up to Anabaptists?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it reconcileable to Wisdom and a good Conscience for Ministers to act at this Rate, and to declare it agreeable with the Word of God?

A. No.

OBJECTION IV. *Q. What is the fourth Objection?*

A. That Persons utterly unqualified are engaged to be Godfathers and Godmothers, who enter into solemn Promises, which they are unable to perform, nay, if we may judge from continual Experience, which they never in the least intend or endeavour to fulfil.

under the Bed of the Deceased, and then speak thus to the dead Man, *Wilt thou be baptized?* And the Person under the Bed answered, *That is my Desire, &c.* Then the living Person was baptized instead of the Dead.—*Dr. Calamy, Part III. p. 323. Chrysost. 40th Homily on 1 Cor.*

G

Q. Is

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Q. Is not the Substitution and Acceptance of such Sponsors in Baptism, a giving Encouragement and Sanction to Perfidiousness, Hypocrisy, and Mocking of God?

A. Yes.

Q. Should Ministers have any Hand in thus prostituting a sacred Ordinance, and putting so dangerous an Abuse on Souls?

A. No.

Q. What other Impropriety is chargeable on the Way of Baptism in the established Church?

A. That three distinct Persons (perhaps unknown to each other, and living at very distant Places) do all promise to educate one and the same Child, as well as all renounce, believe, and promise to obey for him.

Q. Is it not difficult to conceive how a sensible, thoughtful, conscientious Minister can assent and consent that all these Practices are agreeable to the Word of God?

A. Yes.

OBJECTION V. Q. What is the fifth Objection?

A. That Ministers must refuse to baptize Children unless with Sponsors.

Q. What is the Nature and Effect of this Order?

A. It is to make a new Law in the Kingdom of Christ, and a new Condition of Christian Communion.

Q. Is it not also occasioning a Schism in the Christian Church?

A. Yes.

A. Yes.

Q. And are not they, who occasion a Schism, Schismatics?

A. Yes.

Q. Had not Ministers then better resign their Benefices, than declare their Assent and Consent, to shut out of the Church, and from Salvation, all Children whose Parents cannot comply with this unwarrantable Imposition?

A. Yes.

Q. And is it not the Duty of Clergy and Laity to become Dissenters, rather than submit to such Laws and Practices?

A. Yes.

The Third Fault or Error in the Common-Prayer.

Q. Which is the third Article, in the Common-Prayer, that seems not agreeable to the Word of God?

A. The Imposition and Use of the Cross in Baptism ^y.

Q. Is not this Ceremony liable to many Objections?

^y The primitive Christians used the making a Cross in the Air, or upon their Bodies, on many Occasions: Afterward, when a divine Virtue was fancied to accompany that ritual Action, it was used in Baptism, as a sort of Incantation; for, with the Use of it, the Devil was adjured to go out of the Person to be baptized. Such a Use of it made it a sacramental and superstitious Action. Bishop Burnet's four Disc. p. 291.

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A. Yes.

OBJECTION I. *Q. Which is the first Objection to the Cross in Baptism?*

A. That, requiring the Use of it is making a new Law in the Kingdom of Christ, without any Authority from him; and, consequently, it is imposing an Anti Scriptural Yoke upon his Disciples.

Q. Ought the Ministers of Jesus Christ to consent to and approve of this bold Invasion of the legislative Authority of their Master?

A. By no means.

OBJECTION II. *Q. What is the second Objection?*

A. That it is appointing a new human Sacrament of the Covenant of Grace, and adding it to Christ's; and, consequently, adding to the Word of God, of which the Law of Baptism is a Part.

Q. How do you prove, that the Cross in Baptism is a human Sacrament?

A. It has all the material and formal Parts of a Sacrament, according to the Church's Definition; 1. An outward visible Sign, We do sign him with the Sign of the Cross. 2. An inward spiritual Grace. In Token he shall not be ashamed to confess the Faith of Christ, and manfully fight under his Banner, and continue Christ's faithful Soldier and Servant, &c.

Q. Have

By Canon 30, the Cross signifies the Merits of Christ's Death; and is a dedicating Sign.

Q. Have any Men a Right to appoint new Sacraments of the Christian Covenant?

A. No.

Q. Can Ministers be justified in assenting and consenting to this Invasion of the Prerogative of the Son of God?

A. No.

OBJECTION III. *Q. What is the third Objection?*

A. That Ministers are obliged to deny Christian Baptism, to all those Children whose Parents refuse to have them crossed.

Q. What is there criminal in this Denial?

A. It makes a new Condition of Admission into the Kingdom of Christ, and, consequently, is making the Door thereof much narrower than he left it.

Q. If Baptism regenerate, and makes Children Heirs of Heaven, according to Church Principles, is it not more than savage Cruelty to deny Children Grace and eternal Happiness, because their Parents scruple a human Ceremony?

A. Yes.

Q. By the same Authority, and with the same Justice, might not Men require the Use of Cream,

A symbolical Rite of human Invention, signifying what it does not effect, and then introduced into the solemn Worship of God, is so like those vain Imaginations and Representations forbidden in the second Commandment, that the very Suspicion is more against Edification than their Use can pretend to.—Bishop Taylor's Duct. dub. Book III. c. 4. p. 681.

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Salt, Spittle, and twenty other Fopperies, as Conditions of Baptism, or necessary Appendages to it?

A. Yes.

Q. Does it become Christian Ministers to assent and consent to such an Imposition in the Christian Church, by which thousands of Children are shut out of the Church, unless they have more Qualifications than Christ requires?

A. No.

Q. Is not this punishing Men more severely, for disliking a human Ceremony, than for want of Virtue and a good Life?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it not the Duty of every Layman to dissent from and oppose such unreasonable Impositions?

A. Yes.

The Fourth Fault or Error in the Common-Prayer.

Q. What is a fourth Article in the Common-Prayer which does not appear to be agreeable to the Word of God?

A. Imposing the Gesture of kneeling at the Lord's Supper^a.

Q. Is kneeling at the Lord's Supper an unscriptural, an improper, or unlawful Gesture?

^a See Canon 23d, and the Communion Office.

A. It

A. It is considered in all these Views by many ^b.

Q. Should improper or unscriptural Customs be brought into the Church, be imposed on Men, and established by Law?

A. No.

Q. But,

^b On what Accounts this Gesture is disapproved by the Dissenters may be seen, p. 42.

The common People strenuously plead for kneeling at the Sacrament on this only Ground, *viz.* "The Reverence due to Christ, who is there supposed to transact with us, and the Humility fit to be expressed in the receiving a Gift of such inestimable Value as his Body and Blood." And then they wisely bring into Comparison, the Posture in which we sue for or receive Favours at the Hand of earthly Princes: Arguing, "That if we kneel to a worldly Sovereign, in the receiving a temporal and perhaps trifling Benefit; much more ought we to the Supreme Lord of all, when he is conferring on us the Seals of eternal Life."

How plausibly soever this appears, it really concludes nothing, but the Weakness of those that offer it. For, in the first Place, the Point in question is, a Mode or Circumstance of an Ordinance *instituted by Christ*; in which we ought to conform exactly, or as nearly as possible, to the divine Original, without presuming to add to, or make the least needless Alteration; for, proceeding otherwise, is, in effect, declaring, that the Thing was not originally directed, or done, so well, as it might be, or as we have improved it; which is, at least, bordering on Blasphemy. And, secondly, If Christ did celebrate this Sacrament with his Disciples sitting, [*Matth. xxvi. 20. Mark xiv. 18. Luke xxii. 14.*] and if those Disciples received immediately at his own sacred Hands, these inestimable Benefits, his Body and Blood, without kneeling, or imagining it to be their Duty, or ever after intimating any thing like it in their Writings to the Churches, how comes it to be any more the Duty of Chri-

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Q. But, suppose the Gesture not unlawful or improper, yet is it not, in a high degree, sinful, to impose it on Christ's Disciples, and insist on it as a Term of Christian Communion?

A. Yes.

Q. Has

Christians now to receive them kneeling, and when distributed, not by our Lord himself, but by a Minister, and the Communicant's Fellow-Servant? Are the Symbols now of greater Dignity or Value than when consecrated and delivered by Christ in Person; or, is greater Reverence to be testified in receiving them from a Proxy, than when transacting with the Principal? But, lastly, this pretended, this voluntary Humility, (a sort of Humility whereof *St. Paul* seems to have had a bad Opinion, *Col. ii. 18.*) is by no means agreeable with good Sense or genteel Behaviour; nor is it conformable, as the Vulgar are made to imagine, and are used to alledge, with the Ceremonial observed between Princes and private Men. Should the greatest Sovereign admit the meanest Subject to an Intercourse with him, he must be a Stranger to all Propriety or Politeness, if he exacted any Marks of Homage in such a Circumstance: And, on the other hand, it would be but ill Manners in the Inferior, to offer a Devoir, which it was not decent for the Superior to accept. So, should a King invite any of his Subjects to a Repast, would he oblige them to receive his Benevolence kneeling; nay, would he admit of their doing so; or would any but a Fool or Rustic fancy such a Posture became the Condition of a Guest, in which the Goodness of his Sovereign had placed him? How would the Honour be lessened, and consequently the Favour diminished, by requiring, or even permitting him to participate thereof in so servile a Manner. Indeed, as the Beneficiary ought to return Thanks for the Honour done him; in this Part, whatever is the usual Indication of Gratitude or Reverence will be suitable, and the Omission of it would be indecent. The Behaviour of Protestant Dissenters in the celebrating of the Lord's Supper is exactly corresponding with

Q. Has not every Disciple of Christ a Right to partake of the Lord's Supper?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it not then a crying Injustice, to exclude them from it, unless they will submit to an improper Gesture, sinfully imposed?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it not an intolerable Hardship on the Clergy to bind them to such unjust Acts, and to oblige them also to assent to them as agreeable to the Word of God?

this View of the Case. There is therein a Mixture of Prayers and Praises, which are adoringly performed; but the Act of Communicating is, as it certainly ought to be, in a table or eating Posture. If those who, for want of due Consideration, are fond of this Impropriety, *i. e.* kneeling at the Sacrament, were content with practising it themselves, their Mistake might be harmless; but to make it a Term of Communion, to impose it, and treat those who refuse it as Criminals, is a most inexcusable Procedure. The faithful and wise Servant, who, being set over Christ's Household, gives to his Fellow-Servants their Meat in due Season, is blessed; but a Woe is denounced against that evil Servant who smiteth his Fellows, *Matth. xxiv. 45, 49.* There are two remarkable Passages of Scripture, that are sufficient to discountenance all such erroneous Zeal as is founded on Men's Ignorance of the true Nature of Things, and a foolish Imagination of their being able to correct, or improve upon, divine Appointments. Therein are recorded the Follies of no less a Man than St. *Peter*; one of which was severely rebuked, the other indirectly reprehended, by his Master, tho' both proceeded from honest (but groundless) Humility and Respect: For the first of them, see *Matth. xvi. 21, 22, 23.* for the second, *John xiii. 6, 7, 8.* These officious Imposers, however pretending the Honour of Christ and the Beauty of his Worship, will have no other Reward of their Labour than, *who hath required these Things at your Hands?*

A. Yes.

A. Yes.

Q. Ought not Ministers and People unanimously to dissent from, and protest against, such an Exorbitance of Power, and unwarrantable Invasion of Christians Rights?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it not also a ridiculous Impropriety to invite Guests to a Feast, and then bar them from the Table by Rails?

A. Yes.

The Fifth Fault or Error in the Common-Prayer.

Q. Which is the fifth Article in the Common-Prayer, that seems far, very far, from being agreeable to the Word of God?

A. The Form of Absolution, in the Order for the Visitation of the Sick.

Q. What is that Form?

The railing of the Communion Table, with which we may connect the calling of it an Altar, is admirably fitted to favour the Notion of the Sacrament's being a real propitiatory Sacrifice, and to stamp a most venerable Dignity on the Persons employed in consecrating the Elements, and offering them up, as PRIESTS; they being admitted within the sacred Inclosure, which the Laity are not allowed to enter, and standing close by the holy Offering, before which the People are to kneel at more awful Distance. These superstitious Doctrines and Practices have, at all Time, been prejudicial to real Religion; which ever decays as the others prevail: Those, therefore, who have the latter at heart, should check the former as far as is in their Power,

A. After

A. After Prayers and Exhortations by the Minister, and Confession by the sick Party, the Priest is to absolve him in these Words,
“ Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left Power
“ to his Church to absolve all Sinners, which
“ truly repent and believe in him, of his great
“ Mercy forgive thee thine Offences : And by
“ his Authority, committed to me, I ABSOLVE
“ thee from ALL thy Sins, in the Name of the
“ FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY
“ GHOST. Amen.”

Q. But has JESUS CHRIST given this great Authority or Power to any Church, or to any Ministers now in Being ?

A. No : Neither to the Church of England, Scotland, or France, neither to Priests, Bishops, or Popes.

Q. Would not such Authority be a vain and useleſs Trust, unless CHRIST had also conveyed a Faculty of searching the Heart, and knowing who are true Penitents and sincere Believers ?

A. Yes ; for otherwise Priests may absolve those whom Christ will certainly condemn ; as sometimes they have absolved those whom the Head of their own Church, the Parliament, and the Judges, have already and very justly condemned.

Q. Are these Absolutions at Death consistent with the Gospel, and the Doctrine which Christian Ministers preach to living Men concerning the Necessity of Holiness ?

A. No,

A. No, but clearly contradictory to both.

Q. Must not then such a Behaviour disgrace the Priestly Character, and sink the Clergy, who are guilty of it, into great and just Contempt?

A. Yes; in regard it is assuming a Power they have no Claim to; it is abusing and profaning one of the most solemn Offices a Man can be employed in; and it is leading Men into groundless Hopes of Salvation, and consequently giving Countenance to a wicked Life, and thereby betraying the greatest Interest of Mankind; and a doing all this in the tremendous Names of FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST.

Q. Ought not the Clergy to dissent, rather than submit promiscuously to perform such an Office?

A. Yes; and the Laity ought to unite in procuring Reformation in a Point of such Importance to Religion and the Safety of Souls.

The Sixth Fault or Error in the Common-Prayer.

Q. Which is the sixth Article in the Common-Prayer that seems not very agreeable to the Word of God?

A. Pronouncing, in the Funeral Office, all Persons saved and happy, after Death, except the

the Unbaptized, the Excommunicated, and Self-Murderers ^d.

Q. Is this agreeable to the Word of God?

A. So far from it, that it is contradictory to the whole Tenor of the Gospel, to the Light of Nature, and to the Reason of Mankind.

Q. Which are the three Clauses in the Office of Burial that are so obnoxious?

A. Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God, of his great Mercy, to take unto himself the Soul of our dear Brother, here departed; we therefore commit his Body to the Ground——in sure and certain Hope of the Resurrection to eternal Life.

We give thee hearty Thanks, for that it has pleased thee to deliver this our Brother out of the Miseries of this sinful World.

We meekly beseech thee, O Father, that when we depart this Life, we may rest in him (Christ) as our Hope is this our Brother doth.

Q. Do not these Sentences, in the strongest manner, imply, that the Person officiating, and all joining him, are thoroughly persuaded of the happy Condition of the deceased?

A. Yes.

Q. But what are the plain Declarations of God's Word?

A. That the Unmerciful and Uncharitable shall go away into everlasting Punishment. That they

^d Canon 68. The Burial Office. On the Account of this Office, Archbishop Bancroft would never undertake the Cure of Souls. *Cal. Abridg. Vol. I. p. 226.*

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who have done Evil shall come forth to the Resurrection of Damnation. That the Unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God; neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, Thieves, Covetous, Drunkards. Matth. xxv. 46. John v. 29. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

Q. Do not many live and die under some or other of these dreadful Characters, who, notwithstanding, have been baptized, have not been excommunicated, nor laid violent Hands on themselves?

A. Yes.

Q. If such as these could be saved, would it be true, that the Gate is straight, and the Way narrow which leads to Life?

A. No; it would be exceeding broad.

Q. Yet, is not the Burial Office read over many such as these?

A. Yes.

Q. If the Gospel be true, must not that Doctrine and those Prayers be altogether unjustifiable, which lead Men to think that such ungodly Sinners are saved?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it reasonable to believe, that God will make no Distinction between the Righteous and the Wicked, his Servants and his Enemies?

A. Far from it, nothing more unreasonable.

Q. What shall we then say to the promiscuous Reading this Office over Good and Bad, the Penitent and Impenitent?

A. It

A. It is an Affront to the Perfections and Government of God, and confounding the eternal and unchangeable Distinction between Good and Evil.

Q. *What further evil Tendency bath it?*

A. It gives a pernicious Encouragement to a loose and vicious Life, when, over Men's Graves, at a solemn Meeting of the Neighbourhood, a Minister of Jesus Christ, in the strongest Terms, speaketh of them, even to God, as safe, happy, and blessed in Death, how wickedly soever they have lived.

Q. *If Ministers, in Conformity to Reason and the Gospel, condemn those in their Sermons, whom they absolve and justify in their last Prayers; will such Inconsistency in their public Ministrations consist with Faithfulness to their Master and the Souls of Men?*

A. No.

Q. *Can it then be a Principle of true Christian Charity, which leads Men to hope well of the State of the Wicked after Death, in Contradiction to Reason, to the Gospel, and to Ministers own Sermons?*

A. No; it is a vain and hurtful Presumption.

Q. *If a Man should solemnly praise God for his Friend's safe Arrival in a distant Country, when he had no Evidence, or Grounds of Probability, that he was arrived there, but, on the contrary, had more Reason to fear the Ship in which he went*

foundered, and he was drowned, what should we call such a Behaviour?

A. It would be nothing less than a solemn Mocking of God; it is what every one will condemn in the supposed Case, and it is no less culpable in that which is now in question.

Q. *Is it not then a grievous Hardship on Ministers, to be obliged to read this Office over all they interr, without any Discrimination?*

A. Yes, certainly; and must gall the Conscience of every pious and considerate Clergyman.

Q. *But is it not still a greater Hardship to require them to affirm and declare that this is agreeable to God's Word?*

A. Yes.

Q. *Is it not the Duty then of every Minister to avoid such a Subscription, Declaration, and Practice?*

A. Yes: And it is likewise the Duty of the People to stand up for the Liberty of their Ministers.

The seventh Fault or Error in the Common-Prayer.

Q. *Which is the seventh Point in the Common-Prayer that seems far from being agreeable to the Word of God?*

A. Read-

A. Reading the *Athanasian Creed* as the Faith of the Minister and People, and as the Catholic Christian Faith *.

Q. What Character may be truly given of this Creed?

A. It appears to be a Heap of unscriptural, contradictory, unintelligible Propositions, containing, besides the doctrinal Absurdities, the most unwarrantable damnatory Clauses, † repugnant to Reason, to Scripture, to Charity; all which are inconsistent with the requiring Men's Assent, as a Term of Salvation, to what is incomprehensible, or contrary to common Sense and the revealed Will of God, or with the pronouncing them damned, if they don't believe what they cannot apprehend.

* The eighth Article of the Church of *England* obliges Men to receive and believe the *Athanasian Creed*, and asserts it may be proved by the Word of God. See both the Creed and the Rubric before it.

In the *Litany*, there are direct Addresses to the Son of God, and to the Holy Ghost. "O God the Son, have Mercy upon us. O God the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, have Mercy upon us. O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, &c. Son of God we beseech thee to hear us. O Lamb of God have Mercy upon us." Those who believe Jesus Christ is indeed the *Son* of God, that is, a derived and subordinate Being, will consider this addressing him as *supreme God*, or equal with the Father, as a Species of Idolatry, and as subverting his Mediatorship: And it behoves those Ministers, who thus think, to beware how they lead their People in a Worship, which, upon their own Principles, is unjustifiable.

† See Articles 1st and 2d, one in the middle, and the last, of this Creed.

Q. Has the Church any Cause to glory in respect of this Creed?

A. No: The making it a Part of the solemn Worship of God, into which nothing should enter that is obscure, much less that is apparently absurd, is very blameable; and to recite it as the Christian Catholic Faith, and, in the awful Presence of the Almighty, denounce Damnation on all who do not receive it in that Character, and as a Condition of Salvation, is great Presumption; but worst of all is it to subscribe and declare, that such a Composition is, in every Part, agreeable to the Word of God. So that, on the whole, the retaining of this Creed in the Liturgy, is the Occasion of Offence to many, and reflects much Dishonour on the Church^s.

Q. Is it not the Duty therefore of both Ministers and People to be Dissenters in this Point?

A. Yes^h.

^s Archbishop Tillotson wished, and every good Man may concur with him, that the Church was fairly rid of it.

^h It may be reckoned another Liturgical Error, that *Bishops, Priests and Deacons* are made three distinct Orders in the Church by divine Appointment; which Ministers assent to and subscribe as Truth. — See *Wickliffe's* Opinion about this Question, in *Pierce's Vindic.* p. 4 and 10. Part III. ch. 1. See also *Naked Truth*, Part I. *Corbet's Remains.* *Baxter* and *Boyle* on Episcopacy. Pref. to the *Form of Ordination.*

The Eighth Class of Errors in the Common-Prayer.

Q. What other Articles in the Common-Prayer-Book seem not to be agreeable to the Word of God, and so not fit to be assented to as such?

A. 1. The false Rule for finding Easter-Dayⁱ.
2. Idle and lying Stories from the Apocrypha.
3. Some Mistranslations of the Scripture. 4. The Injunction to reject from Communion all who are not confirmed, or who desire not Episcopal Confirmation^k.

Q. What Ground of Exception is there against these several Articles?

A. With regard to the first, It is unlawful for Men to lie deliberately in any Matter, tho' ever so small; if then the Rule to find Easter, in the Common-Prayer-Book, be false, as it is allowed to be, it must be a heinous Falsity, in those who know that, to declare it true, and agreeable to the Word of God. As to the second, It is a gross Imposition on the People's Understandings, to read to them the Apocryphal Books, as if they were holy Scripture; and it is also a Prophanation of sacred Things to offer such silly Tales in God's House, in

ⁱ See the Tables for the moveable and immoveable Feasts; also, the Occasional Paper, Vol. III. N. 3. Dr. Calamy's Abridgment, p. 228.

^k See the Rubric at the End of Confirmation.

Time of solemn Worship ¹. With reference to the *third*, If there be but one false Translation of Scripture in the Book of Common Prayer, it is wrong to assent to it as true, consonant to God's Word; but the Translation of *Psalms* cv. 28. either in the Common-Prayer or in the Bible must be wrong, for in one it is, *They rebelled not*, in the other, *they were not obedient*; the like Remark is applicable to *Pf. lvi. 8.* *Pf. cxxxiii. 3.* With respect to the *fourth*, As Confirmation in the established Church, is a mere transient Ceremony, answering no good End, as we know of, but, on the contrary, rather appearing like a solemn Mockery, leading People to believe they have received some peculiar Grace, when they have obtained nothing, tending chiefly to beget in weak Minds an undue Veneration for pretended episcopal Powers,——such a Rite cannot be a necessary Qualification for participating of the Lord's Supper, and therefore the requiring it as such cannot be agreeable to God's Word ^m.

Q. *Have*

¹ They are read by virtue of *the Order how the rest of the holy Scripture is to be read*; and are under the Title of Lessons, without any Note of Distinction: They are indeed distinguished in the 6th Article; but few, comparatively, read or attend to the Articles, while the abovesaid Order and Kalendar, appointing the said Lessons, are in general as well as continual View and Use.

^m The training up of Youth in an understanding, serious, solemn owning of the baptismal Covenant, devoting themselves to God, engaging to live according to the Gospel, and then, on due Evidence of this, offering up Prayers for them,

Q. Have Bishops any Authority from their Master JESUS, to pronounce all the mixed Multitude, who flock to be confirmed, Regenerate by the HOLY GHOST, and their Sins forgiven?

A. Not any at all. Their doing so is an unwarranted Presumption, and may have a pernicious Tendency to deceive Men in a Matter of the highest Concernment: As they must know, that the laying on of their Hands is no Sign at all of God's Favour, and that there is no particular Virtue in either their Hands or Words, it would be most agreeable to their Character, as Christian Bishops, to open the Eyes of the People, and shew them the Vanity of such superstitious Practices.

Q. May not thousands of Christians have a Right to Communion at Christ's Table, who neither have nor desire to have such a Confirmation?

A. Yes, without Doubt; and therefore it cannot be lawful, in a Scripture Sense, but must be highly sinful, to reject all such from that Ordinance: And nothing can be said sufficient to justify those Ministers who do so, or who declare and subscribe that these Things are agreeable to the Word of God.

Q. Are they not chargeable with Unfaithfulness to Christ, and to the real Interests of that

them, and admitting them, so qualified, to the Lord's Supper, would be an useful, laudable Practice, a Confirmation indeed, becoming the Church and Ministers of Christ.

Church

Church they pretend a Zeal for, who are the Cause of keeping so many worthy Ministers, as are amongst the Dissenters, out of the Pale of it, by requiring such Terms of Conformity as they cannot reasonably or conscientiously comply with?

A. Yes; and it is, on the other hand, the Dissenters greatest Honour, to give up Church-Preferment, the Favour of the Great, and other worldly Advantages, rather than wound their Consciences, or stain their Credit, by the Subscriptions, Declarations, and Practices insisted on: For as TRUTH and RIGHT ought to be every Man's Rule of Conduct; so, if a God of Truth and Righteousness governs the World, such Men cannot finally be Losers by obeying the Dictates of Conscience. The Dissenters therefore, as I have said, act an honest, an honourable, and wise Part, and all should join with them in it ⁿ.

ⁿ I think it my Duty to adhere to that Ministry, which seems to me wrongfully excluded from the public Establishment. For, were I a Minister, and shut out, I should expect to be countenanced in suffering for Conscience sake, and cannot therefore but countenance those that are so, according to the great Rule of Equity, *viz.* doing as I would be done by. *Layman's Reasons*, by Mr. Henry, in Dr. Cal. Abridg. p. 672.

For Instances from Antiquity of People's adhering to their Ministers, when unlawfully deposed or silenced, see Mr. Nat. Taylor's Answ. to Dr. Sherlock concerning Ch. Com. ch. 9.

For the Alterations of the Liturgy, proposed at the Savoy Conference in 1660, see Dr. Cal. Abridg. p. 154, &c. For the Alterations proposed by King William's Commissioners, in 1689, see p. 453, &c.

C H A P. III.

Reasons for Dissenting from the Church of England peculiar to the Laity.

I. Reason. Better Edification.

Q. *I*F a Man, on sufficient Trial, finds that the Preaching and Prayers of the Dissenting Ministers tend most to improve his Mind, to better his Heart, and mend his Life, will not this, without any other Reason, justify him in adhering to, and stately attending, those Ministers?

A. Yes. We must prove all Things (all Doctrines) and hold fast that which is good, 1 Thess. v. 21, 22 °.

Q. *What*

° The End of Ministers and their Ministration is the Edification of the Body of Christ: This, as far as we know, was the very Purpose for which a Church was instituted, and these appointed therein; and from their Aptitude to subserve or promote this End arises all their Value and Dignity. If the Case be thus, can it be a Question with any, who is not void of Understanding, or whose Eyes the God of this World has not blinded, whether any human Appointment can stamp a Value on these Means, abstracted from, or beyond, their Tendency to produce what they were designed for; or can supersede the Obligation Christians are under to pursue this important End, by the most efficacious Means in their Power. To content themselves with that as a Means, from which they expect little or no Effect, and

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Q. What Temper of Mind, what Conduct, in religious Matters, can alone render us acceptable to God?

A. A sincere Inclination to know and obey the divine Will, and a vigorous Exercise of our Faculties in the Execution thereof. These are the Qualifications God expects; for these he will love and make us happy; and to pretend that he requires our Conformity to any Church Government or Modes of Worship, which he has not appointed, is a most heinous Misrepresentation of his Perfections and Commands.

Q. Supposing it then simply lawful to conform, yet, if a Man finds it more for his spiritual Benefit to attend the religious Assemblies of the Dissenters, and that their Ministrations better suit the Relish of his Mind, how is he obliged to behave?

A. He is obliged in Conscience to be statedly a Dissenter.

Q. Are there not as different moral as there are sensitive Relishes of Mankind?

to forbear or neglect that which they know to be influential, in complaisance to Ecclesiastical Establishments, would be a fatal Madness indeed. Can Church Governors or Ministers undertake to answer for those who shall act thus preposterously, or repair the Damage their spiritual Interest may sustain: If they cannot, who would, in Courtesy to them, in Obedience to their unscriptural Injunctions, forego the Advantage of his immortal Soul, the securing of which is the main Concernment of Life?

A. Yes;

A. Yes; as is obvious to every Observer. Nor are these mental Relishes any more under the Controul of our Will than corporeal Taste is. And as it would be a Cruelty to force that Food upon Men which they loath, and as such Food could hardly be nourishing, so it is a greater Cruelty to constrain Men to attend such Preaching and Praying, as they naturally, or any way, dislike. Nor is it less absurd than barbarous; for there is no Probability of such Preaching being attended with any Fruit, and such praying, I apprehend, is quite incompatible with Devotion. In short, humanly speaking, no religious Sentiments can be inspired, no good Dispositions formed, in any Persons, by disgustful Ministrations. Wherefore, as every Man must be sole Judge for himself, what Preaching and Praying suits his Relish, informs his Understanding, affects his Conscience, confirms his pious Resolutions, and tends to perfect his Temper and Life, so it is his bounden Duty to seek after that, and adhere thereunto; and it is a despising of God as well as his own Soul, to be contented with other, when such may be had.

II Reason. The Right of chusing their own Ministers.

Q. Have not Men as clear a natural Right to chuse those Ministers they will trust their Souls with, as Physicians to heal their Bodies, or Lawyers to secure their Estates?

I

A. Yes;

A. Yes ; the Right is at least as clear in the first Case as in either of the latter ; and if Interest and Love of Dominion did not prejudice Men's Understandings, would hardly ever have been disputed.

Q. Can Men exercise this Right in the Church of England ?

A. No ; except in very few Places.

Q. Is not this alone a sufficient Reason for dissenting from that Church, till this indefeasible Right is restored ?

A. Yes.

Q. Can imposing Ministers upon a People, and obliging to bear them under temporal Penalties, be justified ?

A. No ; on no Principles, religious or rational ; it is certainly unjust and tyrannical.

Q. What Relief have the Laity, in the Church of England, when the Patron presents, and the Bishop gives Institution and Induction to an ignorant, unacceptable, or vicious Minister ?

A. They have no tolerable Way to help themselves, but by turning Dissenters.

Q. And should not all be Dissenters, for the Preservation or Recovery of so valuable a Right ?

A. Yes ; nor are any to blame on that Score, but those who are the Causes of such a Separation.

Q. But are not the Bishops proper Judges to determine who are fit to be ordained Ministers ?

A. In

A. In the first Place, it is well known, they have not the Gift of discerning Spirits, as the Apostles and first Pastors had, so that they may be greatly deceived in the Qualifications of Candidates, even supposing them to do their Duty, by the strictest Examination and Scrutiny. Secondly, It is, unhappily, but too notorious, that many are ordained to the sacred Function, who are utterly unworthy of it. But, lastly, how proper Judges soever the Bishops may be of Men's Talents or Dispositions, and how cautious soever they may be in conferring Orders, (as they are pleased to term it) they cannot, on these Accounts, have the least Title to intrude any Man upon others as a Pastor: No more than the College of Physicians have a Right to impose Doctors on Societies, or particular Persons, because the State has empowered them to examine and judge who is or is not qualified to practise.

Q. Still, may not Magistrates and Patrons determine who shall be in Possession of the Churches and enjoy the Tythes?

A. Suppose they may, they should not infringe People's Right of judging and chusing for themselves, which Church they will worship in, or whose Preaching and Ministrations they will attend; and they ought not to compel any to maintain those, from whom they receive no Benefit, and whom they do not employ. To say, the Churches are open, and Dissenters may attend the established Clergy if
I 2 they

they will, and so ought to pay them for Preaching, whether they hear them or not, is too absurd a Plea to require any Answer.

Q. On what Foundation stands a People's Right of chusing their own Pastors?

A. 1. They are the Church's Servants, 2 Cor. iv. 5. *Ourselfes your Servants for Jesus's sake.* 2. The People pay them their Wages, Luke x. 7. *The Labourer is worthy of his Hire.* 3. The People's own Interest is depending, of which themselves are Judges, Heb. xiii. 17. *They watch for your Souls.*

Q. How were Church-Officers chosen in the earliest Ages?

A. By the People, while the Apostles were living, and present, Acts i. 15—26. ch. vi. —6. Nay, so far were these Apostles from imposing on the People in this respect, that they proposed to them the chusing of their Officers, and ordained those who were thus chosen; and in the Times presently succeeding the Apostles, the Bishops and Pastors of the Churches were elected as Dissenting Ministers are at this Day, by a Majority of the Congregations or Parishes of Christians ^p.

Q. If, in After-ages, by the Arts of a corrupt Clergy, People were prevailed on to give up these Rights, which should be unalienable, ought they not to agree now in-reclaiming and re-exerting them?

A. Yes.

^p Enquiry into the Constit. Part I. ch. 3, 4, 5.

Q. And

Q. And do not Dissenting Protestants discover a generous Sense of Freedom, a noble Fortitude of Mind, in asserting these sacred Rights, at the Expence of several temporal Advantages?

A. Yes.

III Reason. Free Prayer.

Q. Are Liturgies, or precomposed and prescribed Forms of Prayer, the primitive or most ancient Way of Worship?

A. No; the Patriarchs, Kings, and Prophets under the Old Testament, CHRIST and his Apostles under the New, all used Free Prayer, suited to the several Occasions of that Duty.

Q. Amongst the numerous Instances of Prayer in the Bible, are there any to be found, which appear to be precomposed prescribed Forms, or Repetitions of such?

A. No; except one or two short Forms of Blessing the People, Numb. vi. 23. Deut. xxi. 7, 8. and some of the Psalms.

Q. Did not Men pray to God 2000 Years probably before any Book was written?

A. Yes.

Q. Must they not then have prayed without a Book?

A. Yes, surely.

Q. Did Jesus Christ prescribe any Forms of Prayer for his Church; did the Apostles draw up any Liturgy, or prescribe any Forms of Devotion for the first Converts; or, in short, did the primi-

tive Christians, during the first three Ages, pray by precomposed and prescribed Forms?

A. Our Blessed Saviour prescribed no other Form than that commonly stiled the LORD'S PRAYER; we know not of any Liturgies enjoined by the Apostles; and there is great Reason to suppose that the primitive Christians, during the first 300 Years, used extempore Prayers only in their Assemblies ⁹.

Q. *What is the chief Use of prescribed Forms?*

A. The same as of the Homilies, to be a Help to an ignorant, cold, and lazy Clergy.

Q. *Were not both Homilies and prescribed Forms of public Prayer very useful at the first Reformation from Popery, when Darkness covered the Face of the Church?*

A. Yes.

Q. *But is it a Credit to the Clergy of any Church, that they cannot preach without Homilies, or pray without Forms?*

A. No.

Q. *Is a Man sufficiently qualified, as a Minister of the Gospel, who is unable to pray without stated Forms?*

A. I apprehend he is not.

Q. *What is the plainly evil Tendency of confining Men to stated precomposed Forms of Prayer?*

⁹ See Lord King's Enquiry, Part II. ch. 2. *Robinson* on Liturgies.

A. To occasion or to encourage an illiterate, lazy, lifeless Clergy.

Q. Have any Men a Right to impose Forms of Prayer on their Brethren?

A. No.

Q. Are there in Scripture any Instances of Magistrates, Ministers, or Councils, (Heathen, Jewish, or Christian) imposing such Forms, and forbidding People, under severe Penalties, to pray in public, in any other Words?

A. No; nothing like it.

Q. Ought not Ministers and People every where to appear against and oppose such Impositions?

A. Yes.

Q. But, farther, is not free Prayer preferable to precomposed stated Forms?

A. Yes, on several Accounts. 1. Free Prayer may be adapted to the respective Cases of those who join therein, and to the changeable State of public Affairs, for which no fit Forms can be previously composed: And certainly this is a Circumstance of no little Value; Propriety and Suitableness in Prayer cannot be neglected or undervalued by any who have a due Veneration of God. 2. Free Prayer is apt to awaken the Minds of the People, to quicken their Attention, and enliven their Affections; while the repeated Use of the same precomposed Forms does as certainly occasion *Lulness*, *Inadvertency*, and *Wandering*, as the constant
Repe-

92 *The Protestant Dissenters Catechism.*

Repetition of the same Sermons would do ^r.

3. Free Prayer tends more to improve, in both Ministers and People, a Faculty for, as well as a Disposition to, this Duty.

Q. Is not Human Nature so framed, that by a constant Repetition of the same Prayer, though ever so excellent, Men's Concern and Affection must be damped?

A. Yes.

Q. And is not Concern the very Life of Prayer?

A. Yes.

Q. Would not the best Page, daily read, the best Story, daily told, the best Tune, daily played, satiate, and become disgustful?

A. Yes; all Men find it so.

Q. Is there not also something in the New Nature, which disposes pious Christians to pray with Fervency?

A. Yes.

Q. And does not a Variety of lofty animated Sentiments and Expressions, regulated by Prudence, greatly contribute to that?

A. Yes.

Q. Must it not suppress, or considerably abate, divine Affections, and be a great Disservice to vital Religion, to confine Ministers and People to a Repetition of the same Prayers every Sabbath and every Day?

A. Yes.

^r As even Mr. Bennet himself confesseth, Disc. of joint Prayer, p. 61. See Pierce's 3d Letter to Dr. Wells, v. 14.

Q. Is

Q. Is not Delight in Prayer very desirable?

A. Yes.

Q. But as one great Spring of Delight is Surprise, and as this is the Effect of Novelty and Variety, is it not impossible, in the Use of stated Forms, to feel that Pleasure, which may be excited by extempore Prayer in the Mind of a devout Worshipper?

A. So Reason dictates; and I am persuaded, every one who tries both will experience it^s.

Q. Is it necessary that we know beforehand the Words in which a Minister will utter his Petitions, or what his Petitions will be, in order to our assenting thereunto, or saying Amen?

A. No; our not having a previous Knowledge of these Circumstances keeps up the Attention; and Thought is so quick, that no sooner a Sentence is pronounced, but the Hearer

^s We have the Testimony of so great a Man and so good a Judge as my Lord *Hallifax* in behalf of free Prayer. "When a Man, says he, qualified with good Sense, a powerful Utterance, unaffected Eloquence, indued with Learning too, and, above all, adorned with a good Life, breaks out into a warm and well delivered Prayer, before his Sermon, it has the Appearance of a divine Rapture, he raises and leads the Hearts of the Assembly in another Manner than the most composed or best studied Form of set Words can ever do. And the PRAY WE'S, who serve up all their Sermons with the same Garnishing, would look like so many Statues, or Men of Straw in the Pulpit, compared with those who speak with such a powerful Zeal, that Men are tempted at the Moment to believe Heaven itself dictated the Words to them."

can

can judge, whether he ought or ought not to join with it.

Q. Do we not in Scripture read of Congregations saying Amen to, or concurring with, Prayers they never read, or heard before?

A. Yes; 1 Kings viii. 1 Chron. xvi. 36. 2 Chron. xx. 5—13. ch. xxx. 18, 19, 27. Ezra ix. 4—15. ch. x. 1. 1 Cor. xiv. 16.

Q. But are all Forms of Prayer to be condemned?

A. No: The Dissenters recommend them to all who need them; and several of their Ministers have published a Variety of Forms of Devotion, for the Benefit of such People; nay, to shew their Desire of Union, and manifest their Readiness, for the Church's Peace, to conform in every Respect wherein they may without sinning, they consented to use a public Liturgy, if purged from Error, and adapted to the general State of Christians.

Q. When our Lord gave his Disciples the Prayer he composed, did he intend and prescribe it as a Form only?

*A. No: For, 1. The Evangelists vary in their Accounts thereof, as to two of the Petitions and the Doxology. 2. We never find the Apostles, nor hear of the first Converts, using it as a Form. 3. It seems to be intended chiefly as a Summary and Directory of Prayer: St. Matthew represents our Lord saying, *After this Manner pray ye*, Matth. vi. 9. St. Luke reports our Lord saying, *when ye pray say*, ch. xi. 2.*

In

In pursuance of which, the Dissenters use it both as a Directory and a Form.

Q. *Is it not a great Inconvenience, and does it not expose to gross Absurdities, when Ministers are confined to prescribed Forms, and cannot alter their Prayers, though Circumstances ever so much require it?*

A. Yes^t.

Q. *If*

^t For instance. When the Prince of *Orange* landed, the Church Ministers prayed in private for his Success; but in public they prayed, (or pretended to pray) that God would strengthen King *James*, that he might vanquish and overcome all his Enemies.

The Church Clergy also prayed for King *James's* Queen, when pretended to be with Child: While the Dissenters were free from the Obligation of mocking God by Addresses to countenance an Imposture. *Cal. Abridgment*, p. 382.

And when Prince *George* of *Denmark*, Queen *Anne's* Husband, was dead, the Clergy continued as formerly, to pray for Issue to her Majesty, till the Clause of the Liturgy was discharged by Order of Council. *Anderson's Defence*, p. 268.

Mr. *Rastrick* of *Lynn*, says, he was credibly informed, that a *Lincolnshire* Minister, when *Monmouth* landed in the West, was in great Perplexity what would become of him which ever way Things turned: "For (says he to his Friend) "if *Monmouth* prevail, the Common-Prayer will be taken "away, and *I cannot pray without Book*; and if *Monmouth* "fall, it will set up King *James* so high, that we shall "have the Mass, and *I cannot read Latin*: But if *Charles II.* "had lived, I should have done well enough, for I am an "old D—g at the Common-Prayer." *Rastrick's Letter to Dr. Cal. Defence*, Part III. p. 46.

A Bishop has been surprized with Pleasure at a Dissenting Minister's Prayer; for when Mr. *Watson* was in the Pulpit, upon a Lecture Day, before the *Bartholomew* Act took Place,

Q. If the Advantages of free Prayer are so many and great, and the imposing of Forms so unreasonable a Stretch of Power, is it not right in the Protestant Dissenters to adhere to their own Way, and hereby enter their Protest against Church Impositions and Corruptions?

A. Yes.

IV Reason. Right to Christian Baptism, without human Additions and unchristian Conditions. See Chap. II. Sect. IV. Fault 2d and 3d.

Q. Is not Baptism an Institution of Jesus Christ, and sufficiently described as well as appointed by himself?

A. Yes. Matth. xxviii. 18, 19.

Q. Who are qualified Subjects of Christ's Baptism?

A. Believers in him, and their Offspring.

Q. Have any Men Authority to make Conditions of Baptism, besides what Christ has made, or any Additions to it?

A. No.

Place, Bishop Richardson came in, and was so taken with Mr. Watson's Prayer, that he followed him home to give him Thanks, and desired a Copy of it. "Alas, (says Mr. Watson) that is what I cannot give, for I do not use to pen my Prayers; it was no studied Work, but uttered as God enabled me from the Abundance of my Heart and Affections, *pro re nata*." Upon which the good Bishop went away, wondering that any Man could pray in that Manner *extempore*. *Cal. Abridgment, p. 105.*

Q. Is

Q. *Is not the doing so an employing a schismatical and tyrannical Engine to divide the Church of Christ, and to destroy the Rights of his Subjects?*

A. Yes.

Q. *What new Condition of Christian Baptism is required in the Church of England, and what new Addition is annexed to it?*

A. Godfathers and Godmothers, and the Sign of the Cross ^u.

V. Rea-

^u Several Objections, against the Use and Imposition of both these, have been offered. See from page 58 to 65.

With reference to *Sponsors*, (oddly enough termed *Godfathers* and *Godmothers*) it has been afore hinted, that Dissenters are not against qualified Persons seriously undertaking the Charge of those Children's Education, whose Parents happen to be dead, or are, if living, incapable or unwilling to breed their Offspring as becometh Christians; (and surely, as Bishop Burnet well observes, in his *Pastoral Care*, p. 186. "No one ought to do this Office for another, but he who is willing to charge himself with the Education of the Child for whom he answers;") but when distant Parties, or People grossly ignorant and vicious, who are neither fit for the educating a Child, or have any Concern about it, are indiscriminately admitted to undertake this weighty Office, and this, in all Instances, even where there may not be the least Occasion for it, while Christian Parents, who have a natural Right to dispose of, to dedicate to God, and covenant for, their own Children, are debarred from doing it, they judge it to be a sad Abuse of so sacred an Ordinance: And as this flagrant Evil cannot be remedied on the Footing of the Ecclesiastical Establishment, it flowing from a Constitution thereof, they think their Children's being secluded from Baptism, unless they submit to this Corruption of that holy Sacrament, a sufficient Reason for dissenting from a Church that enjoins it. Besides,

were the Thing not evil, nay, were it right in itself, and in its Circumstances, yet it ought not to be imposed on Christ's Subjects by any but Christ himself; nor are his Subjects obliged, in point of Conscience, to conform to any Injunctions that are not his, in religious Duties; but are criminal, when they do not strenuously oppose every known Usurpation of his Authority.

However, the Case before us is far from being right in its Circumstances. For, besides what has been just observed about the Unqualifiedness of Persons employed as Sponsors, the Part these are made to act in the baptismal Office is shamefully ridiculous, and would be the Subject of abundant Satire and Reproach, if the Dissenters had been chargeable with it. How absurd is it to propose the weightiest Questions to new-born Infants, or to make others answer for them, who could not be deputed by them, or authorised to represent them. Nay, does it not (at least) border on Wickedness, to make these pretended Representatives give, in the Child's Name, utterly false Answers: When the Child is asked, *Dost thou renounce the Devil, &c?* Would it not reply, if able to give any Answer, instead of that given by its Sureties, *I know nothing of the Devil or his Works, of the World and its Vanities*. When asked, *Dost thou believe God's holy Word?* It would say, if able, *I understand not God's Word, and how should I believe it?* When questioned, *Wilt thou keep God's Commands?* The only true Answer, if it could make any, would be, *How should I engage to keep what I never learned?* It is grievous to see a divine Institution thus debased and exposed; and it is surprizing, that Clergymen of Sense and Learning can go through so odd a Service with a composed Countenance.

Mr. Owen, in his *Plain Dealing*, p. 97. justly enough remarks, that "it is a Hardship to oblige Parents to procure Sureties, when the Law obliges none to undertake that Office."

The Sign of the Cross was so venerated in Tertullian's Time, that the Christians, upon every Motion of theirs, going out and coming in, when they put on their Garments and Shoes, at the Bath, or at Meals, when they lighted up their Candles, or went to Bed, whatever almost they did in any part of their

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Conversation, still they would even wear out their Foreheads with the Sign of the Cross. So early had superstitious Folly prevailed in the Church of Christ, and to so ridiculous a Pitch had it risen. The Spirit of Antichrist (which principally exerts itself in exalting worthless Rites, and persecuting the Opposers of them) began to operate even in the Days of the Apostles, and made a lamentably rapid Progress after their Decease. The Seeds of that *Diabolism* (commonly called) *POPERY* began then to sprout, and discovered themselves in the ambitious Views and Pursuits of ecclesiastical Officers. These soon grew fond of Pre-eminence, and lording over God's Heritage. But as this detestable Purpose could not be sufficiently answered, while they had only their Master's Doctrine to promulgate, his Laws to inculcate, and the eternal Sanctions thereof to denounce; it was necessary that, on specious Pretences, Creeds should be multiplied, and additional improving Constitutions framed, which might be the Matter of their usurped Authority. An insolent Contempt of the Simplicity of Gospel Ordinances, and a Thirst of Dominion over the Consciences of their Fellow-Subjects, put the Clergy on embellishing the plain Precepts of our Saviour with pompous and mystical Ceremonies; which, luxuriously spreading through every Part of the Christian Worship, at length changed it into a worse than theatrical Pageantry. On no better a Foundation stands the Cross in Baptism, and the Imposition of it. This Sign had crept into the initiating Sacrament very early, and was followed, in due Season, by Salt, Spittle, Cream, and other such Amendments of our Lord's Institution; which, though perhaps later introduced, are as justifiable Appurtenances of it as the former. It is a Pity our excellent Reformers did not expunge all together; but failed, by retaining this, of reducing our great Master's Appointment to its original Purity. However, if it found so much Favour in their Eyes as not to be expelled, should it not have remained an indifferent Thing, to have been used or omitted as Circumstances warranted? The forbearing it could not be a Crime, the great Lawgiver never enjoining it: But the imposing it on his Subjects, unauthorized by him, is a most heinous one. However,

V Reason. A fifth Reason for the Laity's dissenting from the established Church is, Their being refused the Lord's Supper therein, unless they submit to an unwarrantably imposed Gesture *.

Q. But is not this sacred Ordinance in another (and far more lamentable) Instance degraded from its

these Invaders of his Dominion may now glory in their Usurpation, and insult the Opposers of it, with the Title of Schismatics, Fanatics, and the like, the Sovereign Judge of all may hereafter call them to an Account for this Breach of Allegiance; nor can those be deemed inculpable, who join with them, and abett it.

* This Point having been discussed, in the 66th and three following Pages, I do not chuse to repeat what is there offered. Much trifling about it may be seen in the *London Cases*, Vol. III. Page 71, &c. Dissenters pretend not, that sitting at this Sacrament was commanded by our Saviour, or that kneeling is contrary to any Injunction of his, or that it is a Sin to receive the Elements in that Posture: But they say, that sitting is a Gesture properest to the Occasion, that it is authorized by the Example of Christ and his Apostles, and that Christians should conform as nearly to this Pattern as can be. They alledge, and insist on it, the Reason for kneeling is altogether inconclusive, whilst those against the imposing of it, and refusing the Communion to such as scruple it, are irresistible. Is it pretended we come to the Lord's Table for a Pardon of our Sins, which we ought to receive kneeling? It is a Mistake; we come there as penitent pardoned Children, admitted to feast with our reconciled heavenly Father and gracious Redeemer. See the Condescension and Favour of God and of his Son Jesus to Believers, *John* xiv. 23. *Rev.* iii. 20, 21; but these Innovators, through lack of Understanding,

its divine original Institution, in the established Church?

A. Yes, by administering it, to all who demand it with that View, as a Qualification for Civil Offices: A Custom, whether we consider it in itself, or in respect of its Consequences, which cannot be properly spoken of, but in Terms that good Men would shudder at the mentioning!

as well as of good Manners, will be contradictorily humble. Let them be so and welcome; but let them not iniquitously presume to force others on a like Behaviour, to insult them, because they are not so injudicious as, or have a truer Sense of Decency than, themselves; let them not dare to seclude their wiser Brethren from the Family and Table of their common Master, because, though qualified as he requires, they will not submit to a Badge of their contriving. Without Experience it would not be conceived, that these Invaders of Christ's Authority, these Renderers of his Kingdom, could appropriate to themselves the Title of his CHURCH, and brand with the Character of Schismatics, those who assert his sole Dominion over their Consciences, and refuse to countenance any traiterous Attempts on his Sovereignty!

Whether the Practice of kneeling at the Lord's Supper was earlier than Transubstantiation, I will not pretend to determine, nor is it a Question of any Importance; Scripture and Reason are the Dissenters Rules, not ancient Customs; which are of no Authority with them, but as they correspond with the other. I have before observed how Superstition as it were trod on the Heels of the Apostles, and appeared in the Church before they were well out of it. The three first Centuries were not nearly so contaminated as those that followed; but even they had, in some measure, departed from that Chastity which becomes the Spouse of Christ.

Q. Are not the Clergy of the established Church under a very grievous Dilemma, who cannot refuse the Sacrament of Christ's Death to the most notorious Offender, if he demands it, without exposing themselves to a ruinous Prosecution^y.

A. Yes.

VI Reason. A sixth Reason justifying the Laity's Dissent is, The want of Discipline in the established Church.

Q. Does not the Scripture require Discipline in the Church of Christ?

A. Yes.

Q. Wherein does Discipline consist?

A. In private and public Admonition and Reproof, and in casting out, or avoiding the Company of, the irreclaimable^z.

Q. Is

^y See Mr. Rastrick's Case in Dr. Calamy's Defence, Part II.

^z Matth. xviii. 15, 16, 17. *If thy Brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his Fault, between thee and him alone; if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy Brother. If he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more, that in the Mouth of two or three Witnesses every Word may be established. And if he neglect to hear them, tell it to the Church; but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an Heathen Man and a Publican.* 1 Tim. v. 20. *Them who sin, rebuke before all, that others also may fear.* 2 Thes. iii. 14, 15. *If any Man obey not our Word, note that Man, and have no Communion with him, that he may be ashamed; yet count him not as an Enemy, but admonish him as a Brother.*

1 Cor.

Q. *Is this Discipline exercised in the Church of England?*

A. No; for in the *Commination* the Church does annually acknowledge and seemingly lament the want of such a godly Discipline: But, though she has made this Confession above 100 Years, yet does she still remain deficient therein, nor have any Steps been taken for restoring it.

Q. *Should Men continue in a Church without Discipline, when they have Opportunity of joining themselves to a better?*

A. No.

Q. *Wherein is the Church of England notoriously faulty as to Discipline?*

A. In admitting all indiscriminately, the prophaneſt not excepted, to the Lord's Table ^a.

Q. *Should*

1 Cor. v. 9, 10, 11. *I have written unto you not to keep Company, if any Man who is called a Brother be a Fornicator, or Covetous, or an Idolater, or a Railer, or a Drunkard, or an Extortioner, with such do not eat.*

^a After all this *cracking* and *crowing* (says a certain Rector in the Church) there are Things amiss, manifestly amiss, amongst us: And I am certain those who make so much Noise about the Church, and such Blustering for it, mean neither her Doctrines nor Devotions, but the Abuses and Corruptions that are crept into it. *Pluralities* and *Non-residences* are a confessed Abuse;—yet our *Constitution*, as *Apostolical* as it is, has not provided against this palpable Disorder. There is a great and just Complaint on all hands in the Matter of *Advowsons*.—The Body of Mrs. *Abigail* is annexed to the Cure of Souls, and a Man cannot have the *Living* without the *living Thing*. There is scarce one Living in five disposed of, without some valuable Considera-

Q. Should the Church and Family of Jesus Christ be thus made common, and holy Things be given unto Dogs?

A. No; a Difference ought to be made between the clean and unclean.

Q. Who,

*consideration: And what is the most flagrant Abuse, a Bishop cannot refuse a scandalous or insufficient Clerk, but his Patron will bring his quarrel impedit, and be too hard for him; as the Bishop of Oxford found to his Cost and Sorrow. I never knew but one Minister ejected, and it cost the Parish a thousand Pounds.—There is another more glaring Abuse, that Papists can present, unless convict. The late Earl of S——y, a bigotted Papist, had the Gift of sixteen or twenty of the best Livings in the Nation. We have an Instance of such as he presented in Dr. Salisbury, executed nine Years ago for forging Stamps, who said Mass at his Patron's, and Divine Service at the Parish Church the same Day. One Abuse more is the boasted Discipline of the Church. We had a Chancellor, who had the spiritual Jurisdiction of five Counties, who was such a Swearer, I durst not be in his Company, (though I had much Business with him) for a Judge would not bear a Clerk from one under him. Once, with great Difficulty, I got my Church-Wardens to present a notorious Adulterer; who, though he had a Wife and seven Children, openly declared he had debauched most of the Women in the Neighbourhood; I went with him myself to the Chancellor at Church, to see him presented; but no sooner had he read the Articles, (being surprized not to find the wonted *omnia bene*) but he gave us an angry Frown, and cried *Pish*; and I heard no more about it.*

Another Time I got five or six presented for being drunk at a Funeral Sermon, and disturbing the Congregation, but Money made up the Matter.—For my part, besides three or four, who stood in white Sheets for having Bastards, (and those only poor Whores, who could not maintain them) and a few who have been made to ask Pardon for calling their Neighbours Whores, and one Minister worried

out

Q. Who, in the Judgment of the Church, have a Right to the Lord's Supper?

A. All who make a credible Profession of Christianity, or of being the Disciples of Jesus Christ.

Q. What kind of Profession may be deemed credible?

A. That which is made with Understanding, voluntarily, seriously, and is not contradicted by Word or Deed.

Q. Is such a Profession as this required by our established Church, of all those whom she admits to Communion; or are such as contradict this Profession excluded by her?

A. No.

Q. What sort of Discipline is exercised in the Church of England?

A. A Discipline that has very little to do with the Powers of the World to come. Its Proceedings are regulated, and its Subjects influenced, by Laws and Motives of a quite different Nature. Christ's Ministers are not the Dispensers of it. The Prosecution of Sinners is in what are strangely called the *Spiritual Courts*, where Lay-Chancellors are Judges: There, if they do not by a Sum of Money purchase their Peace, a Process is issued out against them, and

out of his Living and Life too for denying the Communion to a Rake, before the Chancellor had excommunicated him, I could never hear of any Examples this boasted Discipline has made, whereby to deter others from Vice and Profaneness. *Mod. Fant.* p. 40.

they

they are driven to Christ, Holiness, and Heaven, by Fines, Imprisonment, Starving, and other like Penalties ^b.

200 Q. *Can a Church derive any Honour from such a Discipline?*

A. No; but a Disgrace, as it is evidently opposite to the Intention and Ordination of Christ.

^b The Bishops yearly compile a Book of Articles, which Church-Wardens are sworn to enquire after, and to present the Names of Offenders to the Bishop's Court. The Articles are somewhat fitted to the Canons; some of them are usually against Drunkards and Fornicators; but the main Part of them is against those who wear not the Surplice, who baptize without the Cross, who refuse to baptize any Infant brought according to the Orders of the Church, who deliver the Sacrament to any but such as kneel, who stand not up at the Gospel, or don't bow at the Name of Jesus, or make Water upon the Church-Wall, &c. When any Offender is prosecuted, he may have a Proctor to plead his Cause, as Counsellors do in civil Courts; and if he is cast, he has no more Exhortations tending to convert his Soul than are used in civil Courts; but upon telling them he is sorry, and paying his Commutation-Money, he comes home; then the Sentence is sent to the Parson of the Parish, and he must read it, and admit the vilest Sinners to Communion, if the Sentence be an *Absolution*: If it be an *Excommunication*, he must read it, though the Minister know the Party suffering to be ever so good a Man.—Thus, though the Ministers must answer for their own Actions to God at last, they are not suffered to be Judges of them now. *Baxter's Life*, p. 397.

Since it does not sufficiently appear, that the great Ends of Church-Government, I mean strict Discipline, serious Piety, and real Edification, are any better promoted by Episcopal than Presbyterian Government; it is to little Purpose to value ourselves upon the Episcopal Form of it. *Whiston's Argument*, &c.

Q. *Is*

Q. Is it not justifiable, yea commendable, in the Dissenters, to separate from a Church which is governed by secular Courts, employs worldly Engines, and where Men traffic with Pardons and the Souls of Men?

A. Yes^c.

Q. Besides, must not every one, of a truly Christian Temper of Mind, feel more Satisfaction, in communicating with those Churches, which, duly regarding the Honour of our Lord, maintain their Purity, as far as the State of this World will allow, than with such as mix with those whom there is too much Reason to consider as Children of Satan, and Ehemies to real Religion?

A. Yes, certainly. And it would still increase the good Man's Pleasure, to find the excluding of profane Persons from the holy Sacrament attended with that Conviction and Remorse in them, and, consequently, that Check on Impiety, which would be the natural

^c I think it my Duty stately to join with those who refuse to admit into Communion with them the openly profane and vicious; rather than with those, who, being under an unhappy Obligation to administer the Lord's Supper to all in Office, and to transfer the Trial of all Suspensions to the Bishop's Court, cannot possibly use so strict a Discipline.

I think it my Duty to join with those Churches, whose Constitution leaves Room for a catholic and comprehensive Charity, rather than with those whose avowed Principles and Sentiments force them to monopolize the Church in *England* to themselves, and forbid them to own the Dissenting Ministers as true Ministers, and their Churches as true Churches. *Layman's Reasons.*

Effect

Effect of such a Proceeding: Nothing perhaps having a greater Tendency to shame and restrain, or to reform, wicked Men, than the Virtuous shunning, or refusing to associate with, them.

Q. But, wherein does the Dissenters Discipline exceed that of the established Church?

A. They can debar an ignorant or scandalous Person from sacramental Communion, without Danger of a Prosecution for hindering a Man from an Office.——They can administer Baptism without Godfathers, or the Cross.——Their Discipline is not administered by *Civilians*, whose worldly Profit is increased by the People's Sins, and who, in their Processes, have no Respect to the Souls of Offenders.——They do not exclude excommunicated Persons from hearing the Word of God, or from the Church's Prayers, as though they would bar them from the chief Means of Repentance and Restoration.——They chuse their own Pastors, and dismiss them also, if they become scandalous.——They can keep Days of fasting and Prayer, as there is Occasion. In short, nothing is wanting among them conducive to Improvement in Knowledge and Holiness, but every thing is in their Power which may promote their Edification.

VII Reason. Several superstitious and some dangerous Conformities required. Or, rational and uncorrupt Worship desirable.

I. Bowing at the Name of Jesus..

Q. Does not Bowing at the Name of Jesus look like a superstitious and even idolatrous Practice?

A. Yes.

Q. Yet, is it not required in the Church of England?

A. Yes, by Canon the eighteenth.

Q. But hath it any Foundation in the Nature of Things, or in the Word of God?

A. None at all.

Q. What is the Meaning then of Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11. That at the Name of Jesus every Knee shall bow, in Heaven, Earth, and under the Earth, &c?

A. It is only a Declaration of the great Authority conferred on Jesus Christ, and of the Subjection due unto him in consequence thereof, and that should be paid him by all Ranks of Beings. And certainly no Man of Sense or Letters can understand or expound this Passage, as intending the Practice here in question. But if those weak Zealots, who lay a Stress on this Formality, think themselves obliged thereunto, by the Text now quoted, how is it they are so deficient in their Obedience to it; for, according to it, not their Knees only should be exercised, but their

L

Tongues

Tongues also, in confessing *that Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father*: Whereas this more material Part of the Ceremony is wholly omitted: And indeed the Women only are exact Conformists in the other; the Men bowing their Heads without any Genuflexion.

Q. Can any Reason be imagined for distinguishing the Name or Word Jesus, above those of Jehovah, God, Christ, Emanuel, &c?

A. No.

Q. Are not the Dissenters in the right then to decline, and to declare against, such a Practice, which is not authorized by Reason or Scripture, but is plainly superstitious?

A. Yes.

Q. And can the Clergy, who must surely know better Things, be excused, in countenancing so irrational and even ridiculous a Piece of Devotion?

A. No;

▪ The Popish Doctors, in behalf of this Ceremony, urge, "That Christ bowed his Head on the right Side, to reverence his own Name writ over it on the Cross." Sir Edw. Sandys's Survey, p. 23.

They plead also Advantage from as well as a Precedent for it; in regard Pope John XXII. granted 200 Days (or according to Sandys 22 Years) Indulgence, or Pardon, to all who at the Name of *Jesus* bowed their Head, or knocked their Breast.

They plead further, the Authority of Councils; as that of Lyons in 1273, of Basil 1431, of Sienna 1644, of Augusta 1548, of Mentz 1549.

A Protestant Bishop also once urged the Danger of omitting this Ceremony: Bishop Andrews, on this Subject,

A. No; unless they urge, in Extenuation, the Obligation they are under to enjoin it, in Obedience to the Canon mentioned at the Beginning of this Article: And if so, 'tis an Instance of the unworthy Compliances Ministers are bound to by their Oath of canonical Obedience.

II. Vain Repetitions.

Q. Are not the Tautologies, or various Repetitions, in the Common-Prayer, justly disliked and objected to by the Dissenters?

A. Yes.

Q. What Instances of these are notorious?

A. The Lord's Prayer is repeated in the Sunday Service four Times, besides once at the Communion; *Have Mercy upon us miserable Sinners*, four Times all together; *Good Lord deliver us*, is repeated eight Times; and *We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord*, no less than one and twenty.

p. 477, says, "Look to the Text then, and let no Man persuade you, but that God requireth this Service of the Knee, and that to his Son's Name;—If it will not bow, it shall be stricken with somewhat that it shall not be able to bow."

But I hope few Christians will be drawn into this Practice by the Authority of Popish Councils; or frightened into it by the *Ignis fatuus*, the Terrors, of a superstitious Bishop.

Concerning *Bowing to the Altar*, see a Story in Dr. Cal. Continuat. Vol. II. p. 578, and Hickringill's Ceremony-Monger.

Q. Does not this look like the vain Repetitions of the HEATHENS, who expected to be heard for their much speaking?

A. Yes. Matth. vi. 7. Ecclesiasticus vii. 14.

Q. Were the Dissenters as faulty in this Respect, how would their Practice be treated?

A. It would certainly be ridiculed as Fanaticism or Beggars Cant.

Q. Are they not justifiable, yea laudable, in practising a more rational and decent Worship?

A. Yes.

III. Church
Music.

Q. Are Organs, or is any other instrumental Music, required in the New Testament, by Christ or his

Apostles.

A. No; they have no Countenance from thence; singing the Praises of God, and of the Lamb, is only warranted there. Matth. xxvi. 30. Ephes. v. 19. James v. 13. Rev. v. 9, &c. and agreeable thereunto was the Practice of the Church, for the three first Centuries at least^e.

Q. By whom and when were the present Fashions introduced?

A. That of chanting the divine Service, commonly called Cathedral Worship, was introduced first into the Church of Antioch, by Flavianus, a Man of loose Morals, but fond of Ceremonies. The Church of Rome adopted it; and there it went on improving, under several Popes, till it was compleated in the Time of Gregory the

^e Lord King's Enquiry, Part II. chap. 1.

Great, about 620, and from him intitled the *Gregorian Cant*. *Austin* the Monk brought it to *England*. *Vitalian I.* who entered on the Popedom 683, first appointed Organs to be used with the vocal Music; and from him we derive that Custom ^f.

Q. Is this gaudy, pompous, noisy Worship suited to the spiritual Nature of God, or even to the Genius and Temper of a wise Man?

^f See a Dissertation on Cathedral Worship, at the End of the compendious History of the Reformation.

Men run to Churches as to a Theatre, to have their Ears tickled, and, for this End, Organists are hired with great Salaries, and a Company of Boys to waste their Time in learning those whining Tones. *Erasmus* on 1 Cor. xiv. 19. *Pierce's Vindication*, p. 397.

The Homily introduceth a Woman, saying to her Neighbour at the Time of the *Reformation*, "Alas, Gossip! what shall we do at Church, since all the Saints are taken away, — since we cannot hear the Piping, Singing, Chaunting, and Playing upon the Organs, that we could before?" But, *Dearly Beloved*, (says the Homily) we ought greatly to rejoice, and give God Thanks, that our Churches are delivered out of all those Things which displease God so sore, and filthily defile his holy House and Place of Prayer, for the which he hath justly destroyed many Nations. Homily of the Time and Place of Prayer, Part II.

See also *Tillotson's Works*, Vol. II. Sermon 101. near the End, for some excellent Remarks on the Folly and Childishness of Ceremonies. — And, for the Fitness of laying them aside, see *Burnet's Conclusion* of the History of his Life and Times.

Even that high Churchman *Dr. South* could observe, *Serm. V.* p. 435. "That all Dress and Ornaments suppose Imperfection:" Not perhaps attending to the Applicableness of it to Divine Worship.

A. No ; it is quite below the Majesty of the Almighty, who is pleased only by noble Sentiments, devout Affections, and a decent Behaviour. The being fond of such a Worship bespeaks a great Weakness of Understanding.

Q. *What Influence have musical Instruments and ostentatious Ceremonies upon Mankind ?*

A. They gratify the Senses, charm the Imagination, and actuate the animal Spirits ; but have no Tendency to enlighten the Mind, to purify the Heart, to excite divine Love and Joy, or to sanctify the Life and Conversation.

Q. *Is there not Danger therefore of their producing an ill Effect, by leading Men to Mistake, and content themselves with a mere Emotion of the Passions, instead of the Fervours of true Godliness ?*

A. Yes.

Q. *Were this artificial and gay Mode of Worship universally to prevail, what must naturally be the Issue of it ?*

A. It would quite enervate Religion, or turn it into a low mechanical Thing, and bid fair for banishing all rational, serious, and spiritual Devotion out of the World.

Q. *Were not these Cathedral Chantings and Instruments disapproved by some of the most illustrious Ministers of the established Church itself ?*

A. The most excellent Archbishop Cranmer, and the best of the *English* Bishops, at the Re-
for-

formation, were for abolishing them &. With these the Dissenters join their Suffrage, and are to be commended for continuing to declare their Dislike of these Corruptions, and for adhering to a more rational and scriptural Worship: *For God is a Spirit, and they who worship him, must worship him in Spirit and Truth*, with the Understanding and Affections, with solid Virtue and a holy Life; and in his Eye external Forms and bodily Ceremonies are of no Esteem. *John iv. 24.*

IV. Church Holy Days. *Q. How many Holy Days does the Church require Men to observe in the Year?*

A. About 150 besides the Lord's Day^h.

Q. Have any Men Authority to require these Observances from their Fellow-Christians?

A. No; it is an unreasonable and a hurtful Imposition; so far from being warranted by God, that it is a Breach rather of his Command—Six Days shalt thou labour and do all thy Work.

Q. Can a Church, imposing such Things without a Warrant from Christ, consecrating Days and Forms of Worship, for which there appears not the least Authority from him; I say, can such a

^g *Reform. Legum Anglic. De Divin. Offic. c. 5.*

^h Canon 13. The Kalendar and Table of Feasts, Vigils, and Fasts. Feasts 29. Vigils 16. Fasts in *Lent* 40. Ember Days 12. Rogation Days 3. All *Fridays*, except six in *Lent* and *Christmas*, 46. Solemn Days, *Nov. 5, Jan. 30, May 2, 3.* In all 149. Which, with 52 Lord's Days, make 201. So that there remain only 164; though God allows 313.

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Church, with the least Modesty, exclaim against those who dissent from her, because they will keep as strictly as they can to divine Institutions?

A. No.

V. Church
Gestures.

Q. Is it reasonable or decent to make such a Distinction between the Gospels and Epistles, recited in the Service of the Church, as to stand up at the former, and sit down at the latter?

A. No.

Q. What is the Evil of this Practice?

A. It suits not with the Dignity of God's Service, into which nothing should enter that is trifling, or that is not solidly grounded; and it may induce People to pay a less Regard than is fitting to some Parts of the sacred Scripture.

Q. Should not Christians unite in clearing the Church of such Fopperies?

A. Yes.

VI. Apocry-
phal Stories.

Q. Are not these read in the Church, under the Title of Lessons, as the holy Scriptures are?

A. Yes¹.

Q. May

ⁱ The Scriptures excluded, to make room for the *Apocrypha*, are, Part of *Leviticus*, *Chronicles*, *Nehemiah*, *Esther*, *Canticles*, *Lamentations*, *Amos*, *Obadiah*, *Jonah*, *Nabum*, *Zephania*, *Haggai*, *2 Thess. ii. and iii.* *John*, the *Revelations*.

On *Sept. 30*, are read the *iv* and *v* of *Tobit*; where it is said, *Alms deliver from Death*, contrary to *1 John i. 7.* and where the Angel directs *Tobias* to the Use of a Charm to drive away the Devil, &c.

Q. May not ignorant People easily mistake them for the sincere Word of God?

A. Yes.

Q. What ill Tendency has this?

A. To lessen the Veneration for God's Word, which they may think contains Things so unworthy of God, and of inspired Writers.

Q. Is not this a Point of just Exception to the established Church, and in which the Dissenters rightly differ from it?

A. Yes.

VII. Dangerous Prayers and Customs.

Q. Has not the Litany a Tendency to lead Men into the Belief of three Gods, or ultimate Objects of Worship?

A. Yes.

Q^a. 1, is read Tobit vii and viii. where the Angel tells a notorious Lie, in saying he was of the Tribe of Naphtali; it is also said, that the Devil, upon smelling the Smoke of the Fish, fled away, and the Angel bound him. Q^a. 3, is read Tobit xi and xii. where Tobit's Eyes are opened by the Gall of a Fish, according to the Angel's Prescription. Q^a. 9, is read Judith ix and x. where the Murder of the Sechemites is commended, and Judith is guilty of a Lie; as she is of more Lies, chap. xi and xii. to be read Q^a. 10. Q^a. 11, is read Judith xiii and xiv. where all her Lies are approved. Q^a. 14, is read Wisdom iii and iv. where all Children born in Bastardy are pronounced hopeless. Q^a. 30, is read Ecclesiasticus xxiv. where we are forbid to give Alms to the Ungodly. Nov. 23, is read the Story of Bell and the Dragon; which speaks of Habakkuk the Prophet in the Days of Cyrus, though he prophesied before the Captivity, and near 200 Years before the Time of Cyrus. See Dr. Owen's Plain Dealing.

Q. Can

Q. Can Men, who believe the Derivation and Subordination of the Son and Spirit, conscientiously join in it?

A. I apprehend not.

Q. Are not the Prayers in the Burying Office liable also to OBJECTION?

A. Yes, certainly; as they contain Expressions, which, on too many Occasions of using them, cannot, with any Propriety, be addressed to the Divine Being. How dare any one, who attends the Corpse of a notorious Sinner at the Grave, of whose Repentance he has never had the least Intimation, solemnly thank God, for delivering the deceased out of the Miseries of this sinful World, and profess a Hope of his resting in Jesus, or to mention him to the Almighty as one of his Elect, as having departed in the true Faith of his holy Name? Yet these Things are said to God, by all who join in the Burial of the Dead: To which they are led with the less Scruple, as the Priest has before declared to them, that it had pleased God, of his great Mercy, to take unto himself the Soul of their dear Brother there departed, and therefore they commit his Body to the Ground, in sure and certain Hope of the Resurrection to eternal Life.

Q. Can the Dissenters be blamed for discountenancing and testifying their Dislike of such Prayers as those of the Litany, which imply Politheism, or these last mentioned, wherein all Men (except three Sorts) are pronounced eternally happy?

A. No.

Q. Is

Q. Is there not a Custom also in the established Church very liable to Censure?

A. Yes; that of bowing towards the East.

Q. Is there any Deity residing Eastward, who is not equally in the West? Or is JESUS CHRIST present at the Altar, otherways than in the rest of the Church?

A. I believe not.

Q. Do these easterly Worshippers, therefore, bow down to something or to nothing?

A. This is a Question I must leave the Adorers themselves to answer.

Q. But has this Practice any Support either from Reason or Scripture?

A. None at all.

Q. Is it not the Clergy's Duty then to inform the People in respect of this Matter, and endeavour to prevent their paying a false and ridiculous Worship, which can serve only to implant or cherish in them false and unworthy Notions of God and Religion?

A. Yes.

Upon the Whole.

Q. Till these great and numerous Faults in the Constitution and Practice of the Church are amended, is it not justifiable, and indeed laudable, in the Dissenters, to separate from it?

A. Yes.

Q. And is not the Nation greatly indebted to these Dissenters, for that Share of civil and religious Liberty, and of serious scriptural Piety, which yet subsists amongst us?

A. Yes.

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A. Yes^k.

Q. *If the Cause of the Dissenters is so just and honourable, why do so few embrace it?*

A. The Answer is easy. The Preferments and Profits of this World lie on the other Side; and mean and mercenary Men, who value the Praise of the World, more than the Approbation of God, will always be of the Religion established by Law, let that be what it will: Established *Opinions*, in all Countries, have most Believers, and established *Worship* most Defenders^l.

^k A Church Writer observes, what an Honour it is to these Dissenters, that if a Man refuse to drink and swear, especially if he reprove those Vices, he is immediately judged a *Presbyterian*.

^l But then it ought to be seriously thought on, that whatever Names such Men assume, or whatever their Pretensions be, they ought not to esteem themselves Christians, or Disciples of Christ: For, says our Lord, *He who loveth Father or Mother, Son or Daughter, more than me*, (who prefers any worldly Interest before the Interest of Truth, Religion, and his Soul) *is not worthy of me*: *And he who taketh not up his Cross, and followeth after me* (who cannot bear Loss and Sufferings for my Sake) *is not worthy of me, and cannot be my Disciple*. Matth. x. 37, 38. Luke xiv. 26, 27, 33. Again, *What shall it profit a Man, if he gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul?* Or *what shall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul?* *Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and my Words, in this adulterous and sinful Generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with the holy Angels*. Mark viii. 36, 37, 38. Matth. x. 32, 33. Luke xii. 8, 9.

C H. A P. IV.

The Rights of Conscience or of
private Judgment vindicated:

A N D

The Toleration of peaceable Dissenters
defended.

Q. *ARE not Men obliged to submit to the
supreme Authority of a Nation, and
to join in the Worship which that Au-
thority appoints?*

A. No; not in Cases wherein Obedience to
that Authority is inconsistent with Obedience to
the Authority and Laws of Jesus Christ, who is
supreme Lord over all, and the common Master
of all Christians^m.

Q. *But in those Cases, where Men require one
Practice, and Christ is thought to require an-
other, who must be Judge which to obey?*

A. Though Lawgivers are Judges of their
own Actions, what Laws to enact, yet every

^m *Human Institutions, when they enjoin any thing as a
necessary or essential Part of Religion, which God hath not
made so; or when they impose such Rites, as, through the
Number or Nature of them, cherish Superstition, obscure the
Gospel, weaken its Force, or prove burdensome to us, are to
be rejected, and not complied with. Thus much is plain.
Lucas's Enq. after Happiness, Vol. II. p. 258.*

Subject of Jesus Christ is to judge for himself whom and how far to obey; for every Man must give an Account of himself to Godⁿ.

Q. Have MAGISTRATES then no Right to dictate to their Subjects in Matters of Religion, and to govern their Consciences?

A. None at all; for as *Men* could not give them this Right, or part with their Consciences, so *God* never gave them a Right to controul his own Authority, absolutely to rule his Subjects, and to oblige them to act against their Consciences, or to make them Hypocrites, by pretending to do what they cannot do.

Q. But is there not the same Necessity of human Judges in Religious Matters as in Civil ones?

A. No; if there was, God would as plainly have appointed those Judges as Kings do Civil ones.

Q. On what Ground do you deny the Necessity of human Judges in religious Affairs?

A. Because we have a plain and an infallible *Rule*, whereby all who will sincerely apply thereunto may be equally directed in their Duty; and none but Christ is a competent

ⁿ God hath given us rational Faculties to guide and direct us, and we must make the most of these we can. We must judge with our own *Reason*, as well as see with our own *Eyes*; neither can we, or ought we, to resign our Understandings to any others, unless we are convinced that God has imposed this upon us, by making them *infallible*, so that we are secured from Error, if we follow them. Bishop Burnet on the 39 Articles, p. 182.

Judge,

Judge, who has sincerely endeavoured to understand and conform to this Rule. Nor can any Man be a Judge in Religion, who is not a *Party*, and who will not therefore always judge his own Opinions true, and his own Worship right. Besides, what need can there be of any Judge, while one Man's possessing his Opinion, is no Bar to his Neighbour's possessing his, nor does him the least Injury! — In Temporals, one Man's possessing a Thing may be an Invasion or Withholding of another Man's Right; and when Titles are litigated, or there are several Claimants, a Judge is needful, to determine the Dispute, and fix the Property; but the spiritual Concernments of Mankind are of a quite different Species: All may possess the same Truth, or perform the same Duty, without interfering with, or in the least prejudicing one another; as, on the other side, Men's contrary Opinions in Points of Faith, and various Practices in respect of Worship, have not the smallest Tendency, in the Nature of the Things, to prejudice the different Parties. And therefore, in these Cases, there is no more occasion for a Judge, than there is for deciding what Apparel Men shall wear, when People shall dine, or what they shall feed on. — This being the very Truth, there cannot be a more flagrant Instance of the Audaciousness of one Set of Men, than their asserting the Necessity of a human Judge, in a Matter which does not in the least require any;

or of the low Stupidity of the Vulgar, on the other hand, in admitting, nay greedily embracing, such an Imposition °.

Q. Had Magistrates this Right of directing the Religion of their Subjects, what would be the Consequence?

A. As Right on one side infers Obligation on the other, so, on the above Supposition, Subjects ought to be Papists, Mahometans, or Pagan Idolaters, if the civil Powers require it.—Christianity itself was a Rebellion, if there were a just Foundation for the Claim we are opposing; for it was introduced and propagated in opposition to all the Laws and Magistrates throughout the World. But as these Consequences are false, and manifestly absurd, no less so is the Principle from which they inevitably follow.

Q. Have we any Instances of eminently wise and good Men disobeying Kings, and Acts of Uniformity in Religion, which they judged contradictory to God's Law?

A. Yes; those of Daniel and the three Hebrew Youths, Dan. iii. and vi.

Q. How did they come off?

A. The God of Heaven appeared for them, and bore them out in acting according to their Consciences, though in opposition to Kings and human Laws.

Q. Are not PRIESTS our spiritual Rulers, and does not God require us to obey them who

° See the Protest. Catechism, ch. viii. obj. 1.

have the Rule over us, according to *Hebrews* xiii. 7, 17?

A. To wave the Question, Whether those who appropriate to themselves the Title of *Priests* are at all our spiritual Rulers? This is certain, that, supposing they are, their Authority is not absolute or universal. It is limited, in respect both of its Objects and Degree. It is bounded by the Commission of our supreme Master, which their Will or Decrees must not interfere with nor contradict. They have no legislative Power vested in them by him. They can be but deputed Officers, at most, in his Kingdom, to teach his Doctrine and Laws, to urge Obedience thereunto, and execute the Sanctions thereof on the Impenitent. The least Deviation from his Institutions, the adding to or altering them, without his Licence, brands them with the Character of Traytors; and whoever lightly submits to their Usurpation fails in his Allegiance, nor will he be justified by a pretended Concern for Peace and Unity. But, to reply directly, "Let those who assume the Stile of *Priests* and *Rulers* in the Church, neither claim nor exercise any Power but what Christ has given them, in the New Testament, and require Obedience to the Ordinances of the Gospel only, and Protestant Dissenters will give them no Cause to complain of their Disobedience."—After all, the Text above cited affords no Support for such a Hierarchy

as obtains in the national Church: It requires only a due Regard in the *Hebrew Converts*, to the Word which had been preached to them by the dead, and was still spoken to them by the living, Apostles, who were their Instructors, Guides, and Shepherds.

Q. But are not the Sheep to follow, and obey the Voice of, the Shepherd?

A. Christ's Sheep, who know his Voice, will not follow after that of Strangers, differing from his; they are a rational Flock, whose Duty it is to take care they are not misled from the true Pastor; if they suffer themselves to be so, they will not be guiltless; and therefore, it is not only their Interest, but they have a Right, to judge of their Pastors, and are not to follow such as call themselves so, down a Precipice, or into unwholesome Folds ^{P.}

Q. Did the Apostles exercise Lordship and Dominion over Churches and Souls, over Men's Faith and Conscience?

A. No; although they had more Authority and spiritual Endowments than any other Ministers, yet they utterly disclaimed all Lordship

^P *Bangor's Answer to Dr. Hare, p. 34.*

So long as, and in Things wherein, they watch for our Souls, we are to submit, and follow our spiritual Guides: But when they enjoin Things which cannot possibly do Souls any good, as the Cross in Baptism, Bowing at Names, &c. they herein watch for themselves, to set up their own Authority, but watch not for my Soul, unless to make a Prey of it. *Pierce's Remarks on Dr. Wells's Letter, p. 8.*

and

and Dominion. 2 Cor. i. 24. *Not that we have Dominion over your Faith, but are Helpers of your Joy.* 1 Pet. v. 3. *Neither as being Lords over God's Heritage, but being Examples to the Flock.*

Q. Does Christ, or do the Apostles, ever object, to Men's using their own Understanding in chusing their Religion, and embracing the Doctrines propounded to them?

A. No; on the contrary, they appeal to the Understandings of those to whom they speak and write, and exhort them to judge for themselves⁹. But above all, they never absurdly pretended to allow the Right of private Judgment, or disclaimed the odious Charge of persecuting, while, at the same time, they established a Set of Doctrines and Ceremonies, by human Laws enforced by carnal Sanctions.

Q. If Men, then, who call themselves Shepherds, drive instead of leading the Sheep, fleece and flea instead of feeding them, and follow not

⁹ *Come and see.* John i. 46. *Why even of your selves judge ye not what is right?* Luke xii. 54—57. *Whether it be right to hearken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye.* Acts iv. 19. ch. v. 29. *These were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they—searched the Scriptures daily, whether those Things were so.* Acts xvii. 11. *I speak as unto wise Men: judge ye what I say.* 1 Cor. x. 15. *Let every Man be fully persuaded in his own Mind.* Rom. xiv. 5. *Prove all Things: hold fast that which is good.* 1 Thes. v. 21. *He who hath Ears, let him hear.* Matth. xi. 15. ch. xiii. 9, 43. Mark vii. 16. Luke xiv. 35. Rev. ii. 7, 11, 17, 29. ch. iii. 6, 13, 22.

the Voice and Orders of the great Shepherd, what Characters do they deserve, and bear in Scripture?

A. Those of *Wolves*, not *Shepherds*; of *Hirelings*, not faithful *Labourers*; of *Murderers*, not *Nurses*. *John* x. *Isa.* l i. 9—12. *Jer.* v. 31. *Ezek.* xiii and xxii. *Hos.* vi. 9. *Mic.* iii. 11. *Zeph.* iii. 4. *Mal.* ii. 1—9.

Q. Besides, before those who will be stiled *Priests* can claim and exercise *Authority* over *Men's Consciences*, and dictate to them what to believe, and how to worship God, ought not their *Commission* to be clearly proved, as well as the *Nature and Extent of their Power* exactly defined?

A. Yes: But these are disputed undetermined Points; one Party endeavouring to invalidate, or denying, the *Authority* of another, and some exclusively appropriating all to themselves; some pretending to derive their *Power* from the *Apostles*, by an uninterrupted *Succession*, others rejecting this as an unsupportable *Chimera*. The *Pope*, *General Councils*, *National Convocations*, *Diocesan Bishops*, *Parish Ministers*, have severally created themselves *Rulers of the Church*. Some are so moderate as to claim a *Jurisdiction* in *Spirituals* only, acknowledging that of the *Civil Magistrate* over them; while others will be paramount in all Things, at least wherein (what they term) *Religion* can be any way interested.

Q. Have

Q. *Have not Persons of the greatest Eminence refused to obey Laws and Canons made by Councils and Convocations of Clergymen?*

A. Yes; the Apostles of Christ themselves, when commanded by the *Jewish* Council of Priests and Rulers to preach no more in the Name of Jesus Christ, bravely answered, they would obey God rather than Men. *Acts* v. 29. *Heb.* xi. 23.

Q. *Have not MAGISTRATES a Right to punish Heresy?*

A. No; for if they have a Right to *punish* it, they have also a Right to *judge* what is Heresy, and who are Heretics: And if the Magistrates in *England* have this Right, the Magistrates in *Jerusalem* had it; and so *Pontius Pilate*, and the Council, had a Right to condemn Christ and the Apostles; and the Magistrates in *Spain*, *Italy* and *France* have the same Right, and justly condemn Protestants, having judged them Heretics. The horrid Effect therefore of this Tenet's being allowed of, and put in Execution, must be, the suppressing Truth, Virtue and Religion throughout the greatest Part of the World.—A sure Proof of its Falseness.

Q. *Is Dominion founded in Grace; or, have the Orthodox any better Right to persecute than Heretics?*

A. No. Persecution is itself the worst Heresy, and all Persecutors are Heretics, whatever Pretension they make to Orthodoxy. The Dis-

Disciples of our Saviour were Orthodox, even as *Jews*, and the *Samaritans* were as certainly Heretics, worshipping they knew not what, and Schismatics, for they erected a Temple and Altar on Mount *Gerezim*, in opposition to that of the true God at *Jerusalem*, they were also brutal in their Behaviour to Christ himself; and yet our Lord was so far from ordering them to be persecuted for these Crimes and Misdemeanors, that he would not suffer his Orthodox Followers so much as to pray against them, but reprov'd and suppress'd the Malignity of Spirit which they discovered in that respect, as most opposite to the Temper of the Gospel, which is replete with Benevolence and Charity. *Luke ix. 51—56.*

OBJECTION I. *Q. But if People are left to their own Judgment and Choice in Religion, may they not be of any Religion, and justify themselves upon this Principle?*

A. Men not only *may* but *ought* to be of that Religion which appears to them best, on a sincere, impartial, diligent Enquiry, and will be justified before God, and all good Men, in chusing that which seems most eligible to them on such a Scrutiny. On the other hand, that is no Religion, which is not judged to be right, and chosen as such, by Men themselves; and he who does not exercise his Understanding, and act upon his own Choice, is really of no Religion at all. If a Man only professes to believe what another dictates, or
acts

acts only as another requires, without using his own Reason, or attending to the Dictates of his Conscience, he has nothing like a divine Faith, but substitutes a blind Obedience to Man instead of a Regard to God and Truth. *Joshua* knew that true Devotedness to God could be consequent only on Men's *choosing* whom they would serve. *Josh. xxiv. 15.*

Q. Which of these Alternatives, judging for one's self, or implicit Faith, is to be preferred?

A. The former, undoubtedly; and so it will be, by every one who has a due Sense of his Interest, or of the Dignity of his Character as a moral Agent.

Q. In case a Man be a Deist, a Jew, a Mahometan, a Papist, upon Principle, because he believes he ought to be so, or hath Truth on his Side, what are the just and proper Methods to be taken with him?

A. Only Argument and Persuasion. *2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.* *The Servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all Men, apt to teach, patient, in Meekness instructing those who oppose themselves.*

Q. Is it not better for a Man's self to be a conscientious Jew, than an hypocritical Christian?

A. Yes, without doubt; for the former acts as he believes God would have him; the latter denies and opposes what he believes the Truth and Will of God.

Q. What

Q. What can be the only Product of any other Method of Conversion, besides Reasoning and Persuasion?

A. Nothing but hypocritical Professions.

Q. Is it of any Service to Souls; any Honour to Christ, any Strength to the Church, to fill it with Hypocrites and Knaves?

A. No.

Q. Moreover, is there not that Evidence on the Side of all necessary and important Truths, that if they had a fair Field, and Men full Liberty to study and profess them, they would universally prevail?

A. Yes.

Q. What Methods of Conviction and Conversion did Jesus Christ and his Apostles use?

A. None but rational and gentle ones; or Instruction and Exhortation; and it is plain, from his Words, and from his whole Conduct, that CHRIST approves of no other: So that the employing any other may be justly regarded as a daring Presumption and tyrannical Usurpation; against which all ought to unite.

Q. What is all that God and Jesus Christ require from any Man?

A. That he sincerely seek to know, and endeavour to do, his whole Duty.

Q. But who may be judged a sincere Man?

A. One who takes all possible Care (as much Care as can rationally be expected from one in his Circumstances) to inform his
Con-

Conscience aright; and then acts according to it^r.

OBJECTION II. *Q. But if this Doctrine be true, That every Man ought to act in Religion according to his Conscience, will not this dreadful Consequence follow, " That if his Conscience " dictate persecuting and murdering Men, for " their Religion, as his Duty, he ought to per- " secute and murder, and may do it without " Sin ?"*

A. No; if the Authority of Conscience, and the Right of private Judgment, be true Doctrine, then no Man can have a Right, or make any Pretence to a Right, to persecute and murder Men for acting according to Conscience: Nor is any thing wanting to put a Stop to Persecution every where, but the universal Belief of this Doctrine, Of the Rights of Conscience in Religion.

Q. What is Persecution ?

A. It is punishing, or, in any wise, injuring a Man, for acting according to Conscience in religious Matters, or for professing and doing in these Respects what he believes God has made it his Duty to profess and do.

Q. Does not then the Principle of the Rights of Conscience overthrow all possible Pretences for Persecution ?

A. Yes; and if any Man persecutes, that is, any way molests and hurts his inoffensive

^r *Bangor's Answer to Dr. Hare's Postscript, p. 215.*

Neighbour for acting according to Conscience, he is an open Enemy to Society, and ought to be restrained and punished by the Civil Magistrate, for his unjust, violent and mischievous Practices.

Q. But is no Reverence due to the Learning and Piety of Ministers?

A. Yes; wherever Learning and Piety appear, they deserve, and will generally obtain, Respect.

Q. Are not learned and pious Men best qualified to explain the Doctrines, and press the Precepts of the Gospel?

A. It is allowed they are; but Virtue and Erudition do not qualify Men to be *Creed-Makers*, to coin new Articles of Faith, or Modes of Worship, or authoritatively to interpret those Articles of Faith which Christ and his Apostles have published, so as to bind Men, absolutely to receive their Interpretations or Decisions. Ministers, how holy or knowing soever they may be, are subject to the Laws of Christ as other Men; and every Man has a Right to try their Doctrines and Injunctions by Reason and the Word of God.

Q. How far then is a Man to regard his Minister?

A. He ought seriously to weigh his Arguments and Reasons, and submit as far as they are convincing; but ought not to be deter-

* See *Bayle's* Philos. Comment. *Locke's* Letters. *Taylor's* Liberty of Prophecy.

mined

mined by his Word and Authority, against his own Judgment and the Word of God.

OBJECTION III. Q. *But is not this to set up every private Man's Judgment above that of his Minister?*

A. No: If hereby is meant *an absolutely preferring a Man's Capacity or Knowledge above his Ministers*; for I may suppose a Minister, in these Respects, to excel me, without believing him infallible, that he cannot err in any Particular, or mislead me, or that I sin, if I do not implicitly subscribe to his Dictates, or act as he orders, though, after due Attention, and impartial diligent Enquiry, I think him in the Wrong. But, if by setting up every Man's private Judgment, &c. is meant, the *acting according to a Man's own Judgment, after the strictest Scrutiny, and the fullest Information attainable, in Preference to the different Judgment or contrary Order of Ministers*; if this, I say, is intended by setting up every Man's private Judgment, &c. in the Question, then I answer affirmatively, That the Right asserted does indeed imply what is there supposed, it is a setting up every Man's private Judgment above that of his Minister: But this is a Right which every Man ought to maintain: Being founded on the very Nature of Man, as a reasonable accountable Creature; on the Word of God, which commands us to search, try and judge for ourselves; and, Thanks to Providence, on the Law of the Land, which has

secured us this invaluable Privilege: And this is a Right which no Man can dispute, without incurring the shocking Absurdities aforementioned, of Christianity's being a Rebellion for the three first Centuries, or of Men's being under equal Obligation, in different Places, to profess Paganism, Mahometism, or Popery, and the like: It is a Right no one can give up, without exalting Man's Authority above that of Christ; for surely nothing can be doing that more determinately, than concealing or denying what is looked upon as his Will, in Obedience to Men, or owning and practising what is thought to be otherwise, in Compliance with human Injunctions.

Q. If the People have thus a Right to make the best Use of their Understandings and Bibles, to see and to judge for themselves, in Opposition to any unwarrantable Claims of Ecclesiastical Rulers, have not Ministers an equal Right, in the Discharge of their Function, to deliver those Doctrines which they believe to be the Truths of Jesus Christ, and most advantageous to the Souls of Men?

A. Yes, surely.

Q. Can People then have any Right to revile Ministers, brand them with odious Characters, withhold their Maintenance, or any way injure them, on that Account?

A. No; those who do it are Persecutors, of a Popish Spirit and Principle, whatever

Pretensions they make to Protestantism or Christianity^u.

Q. Ought not then every Man to dissent from a Church which establishes Error and Sin, or which usurps Authority over Conscience, on any Side, and hereby infringes the unalienable Rights of Mankind, and of Christ's Subjects?

A. Yes; and the doing so is but asserting our Lord's sole Royalty in his own Kingdom, his sole Dominion over Conscience, and the Obligation of all to study and to obey his Laws.

OBJECTION IV. *Q. But has not every Society a Right to make its own Laws; and in such Societies ought not the few to submit to the Determination of the Majority?*

A. The Christian Church is constituted otherwise. It is an absolute Monarchy, of which Christ is sole Legislator and King. There is no Distinction between the greater and lesser Number of his Subjects; nor has any Party of them a Right to make Laws for the rest, or for themselves; all are equally obliged by those of the Sovereign, and by no other. Ministers, as such, have no Authority but his, and he has authorised them to declare his Orders only, not theirs; it is not their Province to make Crimes or Duties; these are so plainly set forth in the Gospel, that he who runs may read them, as the Prophet foretold

^u See a Dialogue between a Baptist and Ch——man, Part II.

they should be; they are but to preach them, inculcating the one and dehorting from the other; excluding irreclaimable Offenders from the Privileges of the new Covenant, and restoring the Penitent.—But, however this be, on no Supposition has any Society a Right to establish Iniquity, or to vote away Truth; nor has any Christian Society a Right to make any Laws inconsistent with those of Christ: And every Man has a Right to judge whether the Rules of any Church agree with the Injunctions of our Lord, and, consequently, whether he is in Conscience bound to obey them *.

* The great Mr. Howe says, if any Society of Men, professedly *Christians*, do make *other Limits of their Communion* than Christ has made; admitting those whom Christ excludes, and excluding them whom he admits; especially if the *Alteration* be not only making those Things *necessary*, which he hath not revealed or enjoined as necessary, but which he hath not *revealed* or *enjoined at all*; this is adding to the *Essentials* of Religion, it is substantially to change the Evangelical Covenant, to break Christ's Constitution, and set up another. If it be said, "They are only *little Things*," we add, they ought to know, there is *nothing little in Religion*: And if they are *little*, the greater is the Sin to make them necessary, and to hang so great Things upon them, break the Church's Peace by them, and hereby make a *new Gospel*, a *new Term of Life and Death*, a *new Way to Heaven*.—It is in effect saying, "If you will not take Christianity with these Additions of ours, you shall not be Christians, have no Christian Ordinances, no Christian Worship; we will, as far as in us lies, exclude you Heaven itself, and all Means of Salvation." This is shifting GOD'S LANDMARKS; a much greater Crime than altering *Men's Landmarks*. Carnality of Relig. Content. Pref.

OBJECTION V. Q. *But is not Uniformity necessary in religious Worship; and can this be maintained, unless People submit to the Orders of their Superiors?*

A. Uniformity cannot be necessary in unnecessary Things. The Creation subsists without it, why may not the Church? The primitive Churches flourished without it, why may not the modern? The Dissenting Churches do well without it, why cannot the Established? The Churches of *England* really have it not? Cathedral Worship, and the Worship of Parish Churches, differ as much as the Worship of Parish Churches differs from that of the Dissenting Churches. And, in useful Things, *Liberty* is the best Way to Uniformity; as is visible in the established and dissenting Churches agreeing to sing *David's Psalms*, though under no Law to do it ^y.

OBJECTION VI. Q. *But has not every Church, or Christian Society, a Right to establish Religion, which is necessary to the Well-being of every Society?*

A. *Real inward Religion*, the Virtues of the Mind and Heart, are already established by the Laws of Christ, who is Judge of real Religion, because he searcheth the Heart; and

^y See Notes on the Bishop of *Sarum's* four Disc. 4^{to}. 1695. God will one Day convince Men, that the Union of the Church lieth more in Unity of Faith and Affection, than in Uniformity of doubtful Rites and Ceremonies. Bp. *Stillington's* *Irenic*. p. 121, 122.

this real Religion, these Virtues, are indeed very beneficial to Society : Moreover, the Exercise of inward Virtue in external social Duties, speaking Truth, doing justly, living chastly, shewing Mercy, these, as beneficial to Society, are established by Laws human and divine : But *external Forms*, Modes, Professions, Ceremonies, which only can be established by human Laws, are no way beneficial to Society ; but an Injury, as they tend to break its Peace, and to put a Damp on, and are often substituted in the stead of, *real Religion*.

Q. Is a Man a better Member of Society for believing the Athanasian Creed, than if he believed it not, for bowing at the Name of Jesus, or kneeling at the Lord's Supper, or being crossed in Baptism, than if he disapproved these Gestures and Ceremonies ?

A. No.

Q. Is it not then egregious Folly to establish, by Laws and Penalties, such needless Things ; and is it not shameful Presumption to establish them as necessary Parts of, or Appendages to, Religion ?

A. Yes.

Q. And is it not the Duty of every Man to oppose such ridiculous and mischievous Establishments ?

A. Yes.

OBJECTION VII. *Q. But is it likely, that Kings, Lords and Commons, learned Bishops*
and

and Priests, should be in the Wrong, and a few ignorant Laymen be in the Right?

A. It has been so, and may be so again. One *Noah* was in the Right, when all the World was in the Wrong, *Gen.* vi. 8. chap. vii. 1. One *Abraham* was in the Right, when his Fathers and Neighbours were in the Wrong, *Josh.* xxiv. 2, 3, 14. *Elijah* and *Obadiab* were in the Right, when the King and Queen, Nobles and Princes, Priests and Prophets, were in the Wrong, *1 Kings* xviii. *Daniel*, *Shadrach*, *Mechack* and *Abednego* were in the Right, when Kings, their Courts, Counsellors, Governors, and Judges, were in the Wrong, *Dan.* iii and vi. The SON OF GOD was unquestionably in the Right, when the whole Possé of the *Jewish* Magistrates and Clergy were in the Wrong. So were *Peter* and *John*, *Paul* and *Barnabas*, and the other Apostles, in the Right, when almost all the World, *Jews* and *Gentiles*, were in the Wrong. Nay, a *blind Man* was once in the Right, when the whole Tribe of Ecclesiastics were in the Wrong, *John* ix. So was *Luther* in the Right, when dignified Popes, Cardinals, Bishops, Priests, Councils, were in the Wrong. In like manner, we think the DISSENTERS are in the Right, in dissenting from a Church, whose Constitution, Articles, Canons, Worship, and Discipline, are all more or less Wrong; and, consequently, the Establishers and Defenders of them,

them, how numerous, learned, powerful, and wealthy soever, are all, in this respect, in the Wrong.* *Rev. xiii. 3. The whole World wondered after the Beast* ².

* To be short and plain, there are but three Ways for a Man to act in; every Man must either do what is right in *his own Eyes*, or he must do what is right in *other Men's Eyes*, or he must do what he himself judges to be right and fitting in the *Eyes of God and of Christ*.

If he does what is right in *his own Eyes*, in the bad Sense, that is, if he acts without any Regard to *any Laws*, or *any Governors*, this is following his own Inclination, Custom, and Passions, and not Reason, or the *Gospel*.

If a Man does what is right in *other Men's Eyes*,—He is truly of *Popish Principles*, in a *Protestant Profession*; he is the Disciple of *Men*, and not of *Christ*.

But if he does what, after the sincerest Consideration, he judges and esteems to be right in the *Eyes of God and Christ*, he then conducts himself exactly according to the Rule I have laid down.

If this last Method be, in the Esteem of *Christian Divines*, to leave every Man to do what is right in *his own Eyes*, in a Sense unworthy of a Christian, I pray God to interpose for the Support of *true Religion*, before it be quite perished from the Earth. *Bishop Headley's Answer to the Convoc. p. 293.*

CHAP. V.

Objections against the Dissenters answered.

I OBJECTION.

That the Dissenters are Schismatics.

Q. *W*HAT is Schism^a?

A. It is an unnecessary, unreasonable, and uncharitable Separation from a Church, of which a Man was once a Member; or the causing, by any unjustifiable Action, Animosities and Contentions therein, or Divisions from it.

^a The severe Censures of the primitive Fathers against *Schism*, were better grounded than most modern *Invectives*; as then no Terms of Christian Communion were required but what Christ himself had fixed. If Neglect of, or Disobedience to, the Canons and Rubrics of the Church is *Schism*, most of the Clergy and Laity are Schismatics. Dr. Owen's Plain Dealing, p. 27.

Dr. South could affirm, That the Dissenters were guilty of a Schism, that, unrepented of, and continued in, will as infallibly ruin their Souls, as Theft, Whoredom, Murder, or any other of the most crying damning Sins whatever. Sermons, Vol. II. p. 161. Little did the Doctor imagine that he and his hot-headed furious Brethren of the Church were the real Schismatics; or his Doom would have been milder: For, according to *Laud*, The Schism is their's whose the Cause of it is, and he makes the Separation who gave the first just Cause of it, not he who makes an actual Separation upon a just Cause first given. *Laud* against *Fisher*, Sect. 21. N^o. 6. p. 92.

Q. Is

Q. Is the Separation of the Dissenters of this Kind?

A. No; and therefore not schismatical: Besides, as the far greater Part of them never were of the established Church, it is impossible these should be guilty of a schismatical Separation from it.

Q. Is the national Church of England of divine Constitution and Authority?

A. No, undeniably human.

Q. In what Respects is the Church of England a merely human or civil Constitution?

A. In almost all Respects; amongst which the following are to be reckoned.

1. The declared, acknowledged HEAD of the Church of *England* is a MAN, and sometimes a WOMAN; whereas the Head of the Church of Christ is the SON OF GOD. 2. The chief Officers in the Church of *England* are of Men's inventing and appointing; for in the Christian Code we have not a Word about *Archbishops, Arch-Deacons, Chancellors, Surrogates, &c.* 3. The Church of *England* is built upon *Acts of Parliament*; not JESUS CHRIST but the King of GREAT BRITAIN is the chief Corner-Stone in this Building. 4. The Church of *England* requires peculiar Terms of Admission into Membership with her; invented and imposed by *Men only*, without any Authority from *Jesus Christ*. 5. In the Church of *England* the *Lord's Supper* is made an Engine of State, and an Instrument of

of Contention and Division among the Disciples of *Christ*, and by a *human* Law opens her Bosom to the most profligate Sinners, whom *Christ* shuts out of his Church. 6. The Church of *England* is guarded by *human* Laws, supported by *secular* Advantages, and by *temporal* Penalties, such as little affect the Consciences of Men, but greatly concern their Liberties, Estates, Health, and Lives: Which looks very like a Kingdom of this World.

Q. Can it then be a Sin against *God* to separate from such a Church?

A. No, only an Offence to weak Men.

Q. Does not Loyalty to *JESUS CHRIST*, the sole Head and King of the Christian Church, require us to separate from every Church which assumes an Authority peculiar to him alone, and which requires Terms of Communion and Worship which he never enjoined?

A. Yes; we ought to come out and be separate, calling no Man Father and Master of our Faith and Religion, 2 Cor. vi. 17. Matth. xxiii. 8, 9. ch. xx. 25.

Q. Can they be Schismatics then, in a religious Sense, or as to *Christ* and his Church, who, with his Allowance, and by his Order, separate from such a Church?

A. No; but the faithful Subjects of their King, who acknowledge no Lord, Law-Maker, or Judge, in his Church and Kingdom, but himself.

46 *The Protestant Dissenters Catechism.*

Q. Or are they Schismatics in a civil Sense, or as to the Church of England, who separate from her by the Leave, and under the Protection, of the Head and Lawgiver of that Church?

A. No, surely; for they separate by the highest Authority, that of God and the King.

Q. Who then are the real Schismatics?

A. They who first occasion a Separation in a Church, by imposing human Creeds and Articles of Faith; by demanding Obedience to unscriptural Canons; by inventing new Parts or Modes of Worship, and requiring Conformity to them as Terms of Christian Communion; thereby excluding from Christ's Church on Earth many of those who are Heirs of Salvation, and whom he will receive into Heaven: These are undoubtedly Schismatics. — Another Rank of People, who very justly merit this Denomination, are those who comply with anti-scriptural Impositions ^b.

Q. Is

^b *Mr. John Hales of Eaton (as learned and judicious a Divine, says Bishop Stillingfleet, as most our Nation has bred) observes, "That Heresy and Schism are two Theological Scarecrows, by which they would uphold a Party in Religion, frightening away such as make an Enquiry into it. — When either false or uncertain Conclusions are obtruded for Truth, and Acts, either unlawful or ministring just Scruples, are required; in these Cases, Consent is Conspiracy, and open Contestation is not Faction or Schism, but due Christian Animosity. — To charge Churches and Liturgies with Things unnecessary,*

Q. Is it not a manifest Inconsistency in those High Church Gentlemen, who exclaim against Dissenters, while living, as damnable Schismatics, to treat them as Christian saved Brethren, at the Grave?

A. Yes;

“ necessary, was the first Beginning of all Superstition.”
Tract of Schism.

And Bishop *Stillingfleet* himself says, “ where any Church doth require owning of, or conforming to, any unlawful or suspected Practice; Men may lawfully deny Conformity to it.—Those who require unlawful and unnecessary Conditions of Communion, must take the Imputation of Schism upon themselves, by making Separation from them necessary.—So that let Men turn and wind themselves which Way they will, by the very same Arguments that any will prove Separation from the Church of *Rome* necessary, because she requireth unlawful Things, as Conditions of her Communion, it will be proved lawful, not to conform to any suspected or unlawful Practice required by any Church Governors upon the same Terms; if the Things so required be, after serious and sober Enquiry, judged unwarrantable by a Man’s own Conscience.” *Irenicum*, p. 116—119.

In the Preface he writes thus, “ He who came to take away the insupportable Yoke of *Jewish* Ceremonies, certainly did never intend to gall the Necks of his Disciples with another instead of it.” Again, “ Without all Controversy, the main Inlet of all Distractions, Divisions, and Confusions of the Christian World, hath been, by adding other Conditions of Church Communion than Jesus Christ hath done.”

The famous *Chillingworth* says, “ Neither is it always of Necessity *schismatical* to separate from the external Communion of a Church, though wanting nothing necessary, if she require me to profess, against my Conscience, that I believe some Error, though ever so small and innocent, which I do not believe, and will not allow me her Com-

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A. Yes; but neither living or dying will they stand or fall by Man's Judgment.

Q. *When one Council of Bishops decreed the Worship of Images, and another Council decreed Transubstantiation and the Worship of the Host, was it not just and brave to oppose these Bishops, though they called themselves the Ambassadors of Jesus Christ?*

A. Yes.

Q. *Is it not equally just and honourable to oppose any other Men who invade the Prerogative of Jesus Christ, and presume to be Law-Makers in his Church and Kingdom?*

A. Yes.

munion but upon that Condition: In this Case the Church is *schismatical*, and not I, for separating from the Church." Safe Way, Pref. p. 26.

"The Church has put such unnecessary, if not sinful, Terms of Communion upon its Ministers, (such indeed as cannot be justified, and for which she had no manner of Authority) that I cannot presently call all those Christian Pastors direct *Schismatics*, who thought themselves at liberty to reject those Terms; though they ventured to continue their ministerial Functions at the same time, without submitting to them." See *Whiston's* Argument, to prove that either all Persons solemnly, though irregularly, set apart for the Ministry, are real Clergymen, and all their ministerial Acts are valid, or else there are no real Clergymen, or Christians, in the World.

II OBJECTION.

The Dissenters are Disturbers of the Peace of the Church.

Q. Are the Dissenters from the Establishment, by their Dissent, Disturbers of the Peace and Order of the Church?

A. A mere Dissent from any thing does not imply, in the least, a Disturbance of it. Turbulence of Temper and Behaviour may indeed, and often does, attend Dissent; but with this the Protestant Dissenters are not chargeable. If there be any thing of this sort in the Church or Nation, it is owing to that Bitterness of Spirit, in too many of the Establishment, which is so ready to exert itself in Reproaches and Persecutions of their peaceable dissenting Brethren; who, thus, may be the innocent Occasions of a Disturbance of the Church, though by no means the guilty Causes of it. In this Way, even JESUS CHRIST himself might be said to have been a Disturber of

^c It is reported, that *Banister*, of the B—k, was once urged, in some Company, to go and disturb a Meeting of Dissenters; to which vile Proposal, he made this generous Return: “The Government lets us drink and swear as much as we will, and here are a Number of poor Folks have a mind to pray, and get to Heaven, and you will not let them be as religious as they will.”

the Peace of the established Church at *Jerusalem*, *St. Paul* of that established at *Ephesus*, and *Luther* of the Church of *Rome*: That is, by preaching the Truths of God, in opposition to human Traditions and Doctrines, and by endeavouring to purify his Church from the Corruptions introduced by Men.

Q. And are these Duties, of such important Concernment to the Glory of God and the eternal Welfare of Men, to be omitted or neglected, in Complaisance to those who will be disturbed by any Opinions, however inoffensive, by any Practices, however innocent, which are contradictory to their Sentiments or Pleasure? Is their Peace, or the Order of a human Hierarchy, to be tendered at the Expence of divine Verities and moral Rectitude?

A. No.

Q. Who were the real Disturbers of the Peace of the forementioned Churches?

A. Not JESUS CHRIST, St. Paul, or Luther, but the furious Priests, and the Priest-ridden Mob; who, by Noise and Clamour, Calumny and Lies, Arms and Violence, opposed the harmless Preachers of Truth and Reformation^d.

Q. When

^d *Presumptuous Impositions* are the Firebrands of the Church. Ministers were once at liberty to preach on what Text they pleased; this Liberty made no Breach in the Church; then comes a Law tying them to such a Piece of

Q. When the Peace of the Church is nothing else but Blindness, Slavery, and Hypocrisy, in the People, and Dominion, Pomp, Wealth, and Luxury, in the Clergy, is it not fit such a Peace should be disturbed?

A. Yes.

Q. Are Men who quietly withdraw from a corrupt Church, and who join in a Worship and Communion they judge more conformable with the Gospel, who profess, and, by fair Argument, by Force of Reason and Scripture, endeavour to pro-

a Chapter, Epistle, or Gospel, on such a Day; hence arose Contention. Ministers were at liberty what kind of Hat, Cap, Coat, or Shoes to wear; this Liberty occasioned no Contention or Indecency; they are commanded to wear a Surplice; this raised Contention. Christians were at liberty to kneel, stand, or sit at Sermon, at Singing, at the Communion; this bred no Division; a Law is made to receive the Lord's Supper only kneeling; this raised Contention.

The Church was left at liberty to bow, or not to bow, at the Name *God, Christ, Lord, &c.* this bred no Discontent or Division; a Canon is framed, enjoining them to bow at the Name of *Jesus*; this raised Division, and kindled Strife.—Lay the Church's Peace on no human Impositions, if you would have it hold. *Baxter's Key for Cathol.* p. 449.

No Man is angry at another for an Error in sowing his Land, or marrying his Daughter; but if a Man does not come to Church, and conform to the Ceremonies, this causes an Uproar, and the Zealots have hardly Patience to refrain from Violence,—till the poor Man be, according to Form, condemned to the Loss of Liberty, Goods and Life. It is plain, that all Errors, except those in which the Profit and Honour of the Clergy are concerned, are well enough bore withal. *Locke's 1st Letter of Tolerat.*

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note what they believe to be divine Truths, are these, I say, to be called UNPEACEABLE?

A. No.

Q. Much less, when an imperious Clergy, by imposing Articles of Faith, Canons of Discipline, Forms of Worship and Ceremonies, of Man's devising, shut conscientious Ministers and others out of the Church, are these conscientious Men unpeaceable, for not offering to come in again, when hypocritically called by those who tyrannically shut them out, and who still maintain those Corruptions or Impositions that were the Grounds of their Dissent?

A. No sure.

Q. Farther, is not the Liberty of Truth and Conscience, though attended with some Dissension, of far greater Worth than stupid Ignorance, mental Slavery, and ecclesiastical Tyranny, though attended with the profoundest Peace?

A. Yes; nor will any one, I suppose, assuming the Name of Protestant, pretend to say, that such an ecclesiastical Peace as is maintained in France, Spain, or Italy, under the Terrors of Dragooning, and the Inquisition, is preferable to the Liberty in England, though that should be accompanied with some Disputes, Contentions, and Divisions.

Q. But did not Jesus Christ, for Peace sake, comply with the Jewish Usages and Customs in Religion?

A. Not

A. Not with any which his Conscience disapproved, whatever Authority enjoined them. But this, on the other hand, is certain, that no one preached more freely than he, against lordly, worldly, hypocritical Priests, the Doctrines and Commandments of Men, the Corruptions of God's Worship, and the wicked Lives of Churchmen.

III OBJECTION.

Dissenting Ministers are illiterate and unordained.

Q. Is there any just Ground for representing the Dissenting Ministers as illiterate?

A. No. Though they want some Advantages which the *English* Universities afford, yet they have a regular Education; and, by the Care of their Tutors, and their own Diligence, they usually make amends for those Disadvantages: So that, upon a Comparison, it will be found, they no way come short of the Body of the *English* Clergy, in any Branch of useful Knowledge.

Q. Have we not the Testimony of learned Divines of the Church of England in favour of the dissenting Ministers?

A. Yes; Dr. Nichols, who wrote against the Dissenters, allows they preach with Elegance

gance and Strength, becoming grave Persons and Divines.^e

Q. *Have we not also the Testimony of a learned Bishop for the lamentable Ignorance of many of the English Clergy?*

A. Yes.^f

Q. *Is*

^e *Omnia fere orname, & presse, & sobrie, nihil denique loqui nisi quod gravi viro & homine theologo dignum sit, & ecclesiastici cætus dignitati consentaneum.* Nicholſii *Defens.* p. 330, 331.

And Dr. *Edwards*, with great Honesty and Freedom, says, “If we would but open our Eyes, we should see that we are beholden to the Dissenters for the Continuance of a great Part of our theological Principles: For if the High Churchmen had no Checks, they would have brought in Popery before this Time,—by their overvaluing Pomp and Ceremony in divine Worship: So that if there had been no Dissenters, the Church of *England* had been long since ruined.—*The Preacher*, II. p. 183.

^f Our *Ember Weeks* are the Burden and Grief of my Life. The much greater Part of those who come to be ordained are ignorant, to a degree not to be apprehended by those who are not obliged to know it. The easiest Part of Knowledge is that to which they are the greatest Strangers; I mean the plainest Parts of the Scripture, which, they say, in excuse of their Ignorance, their Tutors in the Universities never mention the Reading of to them; so that they can give no Account, or at least a very imperfect one, of the Contents even of the Gospels. Those who have read some few Books, yet never seem to have read the Scriptures. Many cannot give a tolerable Account even of the Catechism itself, how plain or short soever. They cry, and think it a sad Disgrace to be denied Orders; though the Ignorance of some is such, that, in a well-regulated State of Things, they would appear not knowing enough to be admitted to the holy Sacrament.

Bishop.

Q. Is not the Ordination of the Dissenting Ministers regular, and their Ministrations valid?

A. Yes; as regular and valid as those of any Christian Ministers in the World, and more solemn than those in the established Church?

Q. But can they derive their Authority and Mission by uninterrupted Succession from the Apostles?

A. No; nor is any Clergyman in the World able to do it: The Notion of uninterrupted Succession being only a ridiculous Whim; broached by weak (though perhaps learned) Men, and espoused by none but Persons of the same Character.

Q. Could this Point be proved, how must the Line of Succession be drawn?

A. Through the Church of Rome.

Q. Would it be any Honour to the Sons of the Church of England, to be also Sons of the Babylonish Whore?

A. No.

Q. Or would their being the spiritual Children of a filthy withered old Harlot (as their own Homily calls her ^h) prove them to be the genuine Ministers of Jesus Christ?

Bishop Burnet's new Pref. to Past. Care. — See *Isabab*, or, the five Groans of the Church, 1663.

^g See *Cal.* Abridg. p. 122, &c.

^h See the Homily against Idolatry.

A. No.

A. No.

Q. *What is necessary to a regular Ordination?*

A. Only a qualified Person's devoting himself to the Work of the Ministry, being chose by the People, and recommended solemnly to the Grace of God by senior Pastors, with Prayer and Imposition of Handsⁱ.

Q. *Has the Hand of a State Bishop, or a dignified Clergyman, any peculiar Virtue in it, to transform a Dunce into a Man of Learning,*

ⁱ Dr. Outram states the Meaning of the Ceremony of *Laying on of Hands* to be, either the entire Devotion of Persons or Things to the special Service of God, or, in the Case of some Sacrifices, the substituting the Death or Blood of the Beast in the stead of that of the Offerer. *Lev. i. 4. Numb. viii. 10, 13. The Children of Israel shall put their Hands upon the Levites. De Sacrif. lib. 1. cap. 15.*

Zonaras, in his *Scholia* upon the first Apostolic Canon, remarks, That, at present, a Course of Prayers and Invocation of the Holy Spirit, when one is initiated into the Priesthood, and receives Consecration, is called *Cheirotonia*, because the Bishop extends his Hand over him whom he blesses, when he is chosen into holy Orders. But anciently the Choice and Suffrage of the People was called *Cheirotonia*; for when it was lawful for the Multitude in the Cities, to chuse their Priests and Bishops, they met together, and, that it might appear who had most Votes, the Electors did use to stretch forth their Hands, and by Hands thus stretched out, or held up, they were numbered who chose one, or chose another; and him who had most Votes they placed in the High Priesthood. See Conscientious Nonconf. P. 39, 40.

a Sot into a sober Man, or a Knave into an honest one?

A. He must be a Sot indeed, who can fancy it has any such Efficacy.

Q. *May not a Man of Learning, Piety, and Virtue, and who is diligent in his Office, be a true Minister of Jesus Christ, though only ordained, as Timothy was, by the Laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery, or though not ordained at all, as was the Case of Apollos; I say, may not a Person thus qualified be a Minister, rather than an ignorant, idle, vicious Man, though he has passed under the Hands of the greatest Bishop in the World?*

A. Yes.

Q. *Yet, is not a solemn Entrance into so sacred and important an Office, as that of the Ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, exceedingly proper and becoming?*

A. Yes: And upon this rational solid Foundation the Ordination of Dissenters stands: Disapproving the Intrusions of vain Enthusiasts, on one hand, who, puffed up with an extravagant Conceit of their imaginary Gifts and Graces, take upon them, untried, uncalled, and unapproved, to be Teachers of others, when they themselves need to be taught the first Principles of the Christian Life; and the no less vain and groundless Chimeras of High Churchmen, on the other hand, who assert the Necessity of an uninterrupted successive Conveyance

of Authority from the Apostles, to capacitate Men for the sacred Office, and to render their Ministrations valid.

IV OBJECTION.

The Dissenters worship in unconsecrated Places.

Q. Are not the Chapels or Meeting-Houses of the Dissenters less holy than the Parish Churches, seeing they have no episcopal Consecration?

A. No; for many of the Parish Churches have had only Popish Consecration, and have since been defiled by Superstition and Idolatry: But the Dissenters Meeting Houses were never thus defiled; and, on that Account, are more holy, or, however, less unholy, than some of the Parish Churches.

Q. What is the proper End or Purpose for which Houses of Worship are erected?

A. The Convenience of the Worshippers; that is, that they may be in a Condition to offer up their joint Prayers unto God, to celebrate his Praises, and to hearken unto his Commandments, with that due Attention, Solemnity and Order, which can be hardly maintained without such Inclosures and Accommodations as are fitted to preserve them from the Inclemencies of Weather, and prevent
other

other Distractions and Interruptions to which they must else be liable.

Q. May not a Field or a Mountain be as holy as a Church?

A. Yes; whenever either of them is the Scene or Theatre of Divine Worship: For as we know not any thing else that renders one Place holier than another, so, during the assembling of God's Servants in any Place, for the preaching of his Word, and offering up Prayers and Praises unto him, that Place, though a Field or a Barn, has all the Holiness any Place on Earth is capable of: A Parish Church or a Cathedral has no Excellence above these, in the Eye of the Almighty; nor in that of a wise Man, except in point of Commodiousness; nor does the least Sanctity reside or remain in any of them, longer than they are appropriated to the Uses here specified ^k.

Q. Where did the Patriarchs, Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, and their Friends, meet to worship God? Yea, where did Christ and his Apostles and the primitive Christians meet for that Purpose?

^k Matth. xviii. 20. *Wherever two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them.* John iv. 20—24. *The Hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this Mountain nor at Jerusalem worship the Father. — True Worshipers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth.* 1 Tim. ii. 8. *I will that Men pray every where, lifting up holy Hands.* Mal. i. 11. *In every Place Incense shall be offered to me, and a pure Offering.* See Lord King's Enq. Part II. ch. 7.

A. The former, in Groves, Mountains, Fields; the latter, in the like Places, as also in Ships, Gardens, and private Houses.

Q. Has not the Church of Rome just as much Authority to consecrate Water, and make it holy, as the Church of England has to consecrate Earth, and make the Ground holy?

A. Yes; and also to make sprinkling with Holy Water as necessary to Communion, as the Church of England makes signing with the Cross necessary to Baptism, or kneeling a necessary Condition of Communion at the Lord's Supper.

Q. Which were the only Places upon Earth ever consecrated by the express Order of God, and by the glorious Tokens of his Presence?

A. The Jewish Tabernacle and Temple.

Q. In case the English or Scotch Churches were appointed by God, as the only Places of religious Worship, for English or Scotch Christians, where he would meet and bless them, and he had required all those to meet him in one of these Edifices, would not their appointing or using other Places of Adoration be a Sin?

A. It would most certainly.

Q. But do the Dissenters withdraw from any Places appointed of God, or worship in any he has forbidden? Or has he made any Designation at all of Places for Worship, in the Christian Dispensation?

A. No.

Q. Are

Q. Are not all then at liberty to worship God, wherever they find they can do it most acceptably to him; that is, wherever they experience their Veneration of his divine Majesty, and their devout Affections towards him, most vigorously exercised and improved?

A. Yes.

V O B J E C T I O N.

The Prayers of Dissenting Ministers are very exceptionable.

Q. Are not Dissenting Ministers guilty of vain and nauseous Repetitions in Prayer, improper and even ridiculous Petitions, of great Irregularity or Confusedness, and of venting their own peculiar Opinions and Passions?

A. In general, the Prayers of Dissenting Ministers are grave, judicious, and methodical; and if a few, not so well qualified as they should be, are blameable in these Respects, their Faults will still be overbalanced by those of the established Liturgy: Especially, if we add to this side of the Account, the shocking Carelessness and Irreverence wherewith many of the Readers of the public Service are chargeable, who scarcely maintain the least Appearance of Devotion in that Part of their Office.

Q. What are those Faults that may fairly be charged on the Liturgy, and which are more than

a Counterpoise of those that are objected to the Prayers of some Dissenting Ministers?

A. In the first Place, vain REPETITIONS: For Instance, of the *Lord's Prayer*, and of these Petitions, *Have Mercy on us miserable Sinners, good Lord deliver us, we beseech thee to hear us good Lord, incline our Hearts to keep this Law.* There are likewise REDUNDANCIES therein: The Evening Service on the Lord's Day, and on other Days, differs very little from the Morning Service; and some particular Prayers are almost the same with others¹. There are also great DEFICIENCIES in it: There is no Prayer for the two Universities; nor can there be any for new Occurrences. There are in it several IMPROPER, UNCOUTH, and OBSOLETE PHRASES; as, *thine honourable Son^m, prevent us in all our Doingsⁿ, worthily lamenting our Sins^o, may our sinful Bodies be made clean by his Body, &c.^p* Nay, there are plain ABSURDITIES in it: It appears absurd to represent it as a great Marvel, that Bishops, Curates, and their Congregations, should be endowed with Grace^q; it is absurd to pray to the Trinity.

¹ The three Collects on *Easter-Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday.*

^m Morning Prayer.

ⁿ Collect for the 17th Sunday after Trinity. Coll. at the Com. Coll. at Sea.

^o Coll. for the first Day of Lent.

^p Office of Communion.

^q Prayer for the Clergy.

three Persons, at once ^r; it is absurd to call on *Ananias, Azarias, and Misael*, in a Song of Praise to God ^s; to pray, by the *Mystery of thy holy Incarnation, by thy holy Nativity and Circumcision, by thy Baptism, Fasting, and Temptation, good Lord deliver us*, seems an absurd Way of praying ^t; that Phrase, in the Power of the divine Majesty to worship the Unity, appears absurd or unintelligible ^u; nor is there much Propriety in that Petition, *Those Things, which, for our Unworthiness, we dare not, and, for our Blindness, we cannot ask, vouchsafe to give us* ^x. There are, in the Common-Prayer, Instances of PRIVATE OPINIONS and PARTY PASSIONS: Amongst these may be reckoned, the Doctrine of *real* (internal) *Regeneration* in Baptism ^y; that the *Bishop's Hand* is a *Sign of God's Favour* ^z; that *the three Persons in the Trinity are but one Substance* ^a; that King CHARLES

^r Litany.

^s Morning Prayer.

^t Litany.

^u Coll. for *Trinity-Sunday*.

^x Comm. Office. This Petition, in plain *English*, is, "We do ask for those Things which we dare not which we cannot ask for." — A considerate Man would be somewhat shy of declaring an unfeigned *Assent* and *Consent* to such a Petition.

^y Office of Baptism and of Confirmation. It is a *Regeneration* by the *Holy Spirit*, as distinct from Incorporation into the Church. See Dr. *Calamy's* Abridgment, Vol. II.

p. 814.

^z Ibid.

^a Office of Comm. upon the Feast of the *Trinity*.

was

was a Martyr, and his Blood innocent ^b. The whole Composition is CONFUSED : It requires Pains, Instruction, and Memory, to find out and retain the Order of Prayers, Collects, Lessons, Epistles, &c. on the Lord's Days and Holy-Days ; and a Minister must skip backwards and forwards several Times in going through the Service of one half Day. It is an Instance of Disorder, and an Indecency, when Multitudes, who join in one Supplication, speak all together, and repeat the same Words ; we should judge so in any Case of civil Life ; we think it more becoming Juries to deliver their Verdict by a Foreman, singly, than for all of them to concur in the pronouncing it. It is also an Indecorum, for one Man to read or repeat a Part of a Petition, and for others to read or repeat only other Parts of the same Petition. Such Behaviour would be deemed preposterous in any Intercourse with our Fellow-Creatures ; and should it be allowed in our Addresses to the Almighty !

Q. Is all this to be wondered at, if it be true, as Calderwood affirms, that the Common-Prayer is little else than a Translation of several Parcels, put together, of the Roman Breviary, Missal, and Ritual ^c ?

A. In

^b Form of Prayer for January 30.

^c *Altare Damasc. p. 452. Liber iste Anglicanus conflatur ex tribus Pontificiorum Libris Liturgicis: Breviario, Missali,*

A. In this View, it is well there are no more Faults in it.

Q. Do not these Faults recur daily, and enter into the Constitution of the Church?

A. Yes.

Q. And must it not be a Slavery to an ingenuous Mind, to be obliged to go through the Drudgery of such Prayers twice every Day, at least every Holy-Day, without Liberty to vary from them, or to correct the least Fault^d?

A. I should think so.

Q. Is it not also a great Hardship on the Laity, to be confined to a Form of Devotion, that must

& Ritual. *vid.* p. 460, 528, 603. See also *De Laune's* Plea, p. 46, 76. —

King Edward VI. in his Letter to the People, who rose in *Devonshire* and *Cornwal*, thus expresseth himself, "As for the Service in the *English* Tongue, it is no other than the old Service, the same Words in *English* which were in *Latin*." *Answ. to Dr. Stillingfleet*, by N. B. Pref.

Dr. Heylin says, great Care was taken to expunge all such Passages of the Common-Prayer as might give Offence to the Papists, who, for ten Years, repaired to the Parish Churches; and that the Pope offered, by *Papalis*, to confirm the *English* Liturgy. *Heylin's Hist. Reform.* p. 283.

^d The Act of Uniformity, the Rubric at the End of the Preface to the Church Service, &c. oblige Ministers to read Prayers every Day. The general Title is, *An Order for Morning Prayer daily throughout the Year.*

Is it not more in the Order of Nature, when a Minister's Ideas, Sentiments, and Affections, give Rise to his Expressions, than when his Ideas, Sentiments, and Affections, depend upon a Set of prepared Words? In the former Case, the Expression becomes more animated; the Words are, as it were, inspired with Life and Spirit.

appear

appear so exceptionable to the most considerate and sensible of them?

A. Yes.

Q. Does not that Change of Phrase, that Improvement, in the Stile of our Language, which is common to it with all living ones, and which is now become so considerable, make a Reformation of the Liturgy requisite, though there were no other Reason for it?

A. Yes^e.

In few Words, What have those to do with objecting to Dissenters Prayers, who are weak enough to idolize a Form of Service so censurable as that of the established Church? Let them see to the rectifying their own: The Proverb here is exceedingly proper, **PHYSICIAN HEAL THYSELF.**

* Dr. Prideaux, Dean of Norwich, says, if that Stiffness of Humour, which is now amongst too many of us against altering any thing in our Liturgy, should continue, it must at last bring us to the same Pass with the *Romanists*: For all Languages being in *Fluxu*, they do in every Age alter from what they were in former ones; and therefore as we do not now understand the *English*, which was here spoken by our Ancestors 3 or 400 Years ago, so, in all Likelihood, will not our Posterity, 3 or 400 Years hence, understand that which is now spoken by us. And therefore should our Liturgy be still continued, without any Alteration or Change, it will then be as much in an unknown Language, as now the *Roman Service* is to those in that Communion. *Connect. of Hist.* Vol. I. p. 218.

VI OBJECTION.

That the Dissenters are Enthusiasts.

Q. Is Enthusiasm justly chargeable on the Dissenters?

A. There are many, too many, enthusiastical People amongst them; but perhaps no more than are to be found proportionably in the Church of *England*.

Q. Who may fairly be reputed Enthusiasts?

A. All who take their own false and foolish Notions, the Vermin of their heated Imaginations, for divine Truth and Religion; who place Sanctity in Names, Edifices, Garments, and such Trifles; who reverence Sounds, Opinions, Gestures, Colours; who think worldly Power, Pomp, and Grandure, necessary to the Prosperity of Christ's Church; who call the Infelicities of good Men Judgments from Heaven; who raise up an human Structure, and contend for it as an Institution of God's; who fancy Holiness can be conveyed to Earth, Walls, or Vestments; who think they have Authority to force their Opinions on others, and to hurt or destroy those who will not profess them: All these are certainly rank Enthusiasts.

Q. If

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Q. If these Tokens may be depended on, have not many Churchmen been as notable Enthusiasts as any?

A. Yes.

Q. But who are the most pernicious, formidable, and odious Enthusiasts?

A. The last-mentioned, viz. Persecutors; who hate, reproach, and torment Men for their religious Sentiments, and, being pampered with Wealth, and intoxicated with Power, grow murderously mad against all who dissent from them, and will not truckle under them.

Q. Was not Archbishop LAUD and some others of the episcopal Order at the same Time such Enthusiasts?

A. Yes^f.

Q. Are not all those Enthusiasts, or much worse, who, on the 30th of January, endeavour to inspire the Nation with blind Zeal, and religious Fury, working up Men's worst Passions, by Declarations void of Truth, and perhaps not believed by the Declaimers themselves?

A. Yes, certainly.

Q. Are there any so mischievous Enthusiasts amongst the Dissenters?

A. I hope none.

^f See Examination of Reasons and Facts in the Bishop of Chichester's Sermon before the House of Lords, January 30, 1731. See also Mr. Jephcot's Character of a true Son of the Church of England. Calamy's Continuat. p. 153.

VII OBJECTION.

Dissenters can occasionally conform.

Q. Does the Lawfulness of occasional Conformity imply an Obligation to stated Conformity? Or, in other Words, does the Lawfulness of partial Conformity to the established Church, or, of Conformity in one Branch of her Worship, infer an Obligation to a total Conformity, or a Conformity in all her Worship?

A. No. Because I can, for prudential Considerations, submit to one ecclesiastical Requirement, though it be an unreasonable one, is it therefore my Duty to comply with all? Because I can join in some established Forms, to demonstrate my Charity; because I can, without Sin, bear a Part, now and then, in the parochial or cathedral Service, although liable (the latter especially) to great Objections; am I always to join in these? Nay, can I, and be sinless, when I have an Opportunity of more judicious and affecting Methods of Devotion? Though I can, on some Occasions, or where a better is not to be had, submit to hear an insufficient Preacher, must I therefore decline the Advantage, if in my Power, of hearing better, or give up the Right of chusing my own Minister? Because I can kneel at the Lord's Supper, as a lawful Gesture, must I therefore wickedly yield to the sinful Imposi-

Q

tion

tion of it, or to that of the Cross and Sponsors in Baptism, as Terms of Communion: Thereby sacrificing Christian Liberty, (the restoring of which was one End of our Saviour's Undertaking) and abetting a tyrannical Usurpation of Christ's Office?—So that the inferring Obligation to entire Conformity, from the Lawfulness or Practice of that which is occasional only, is arguing weakly: And would be treated with no little Disdain by Churchmen, if turned against them, in this manner, “Occasional Communion with Dissenters is lawful, (as it certainly is) therefore stated Communion with them is a Duty.”

Q. What Construction may most fairly be put on occasional Conformity?

A. That those who practise it esteem the Church of *England* a Part of the Catholic Church, and desire to hold Communion with the whole Church of Christ; That they regard the established Worship, so far as they conform to and join in it, as lawful, or materially sound and good, and therefore tolerable; though irregular and defective, and, therefore, not eligible, where better is at hand: That they are sensible of the Value of that Liberty wherewith Christ has made them free; and of the Becomingness of that Moderation which the Gospel enjoins, in Opposition to the blind Zeal of censorious Bigots and factious Separatists.

Q. Is the Practice then of occasional Communion any Ground for the Charge of Hypocrisy?

A. No,

A. No, not in the least ; but rather an Indication of a sound and generous Mind, raised above Prejudice and irrational Attachments. It has been practised by the most eminent Dissenters since the Reformation, Men above all Imputation of Party Views or Dissimulation^s : Nay, we have yet infinitely nobler Examples of it, Persons against whom no Charge of this Nature can possibly lie, *viz.* *John* the Baptist, *St. Paul*, and even our Lord *JESUS CHRIST* himself ; who were all occasional Conformists to the Jewish Church.

Q. *In case any Protestant Dissenter, whose Conscience previously allowed of partial or occasional Conformity, be called or admitted to any Office, by which he may honestly support his Family, or serve the public Interest, the Enjoyment or Exercise of which Office obliges to the receiving of the Lord's Supper in the established Church ; is his communicating on such an Occasion to be censured, provided he is qualified for the Ordinance as a Christian ?*

A. I apprehend it is not.

Q. *But now, what is the natural Import of stated or entire Conformity ?*

^s *Mr. Baxter*, when ejected out of the Church, advised his People not to absent from the established Worship, but in three Cases ; I. When the Minister was utterly insufficient. II. When he preached against any necessary Article of Faith. III. When he defeated the End of his Office, by representing a holy Life as needless or odious. *Baxter's Life* abridged, p. 299. See also his *Catholic Communion*.

Q. 2

A. It

A. It imports in general, that the Conformists prefer the Worship and Ordinances of that Church, with which they constantly communicate, to those of any other.—And, therefore, it does not follow, from Dissenters occasionally conforming to the established Church, in consequence of their judging that to be lawful, that they can do so altogether, and so ought to do it; because such a Practice would be a declared Preference of a Church, which, according to their professed Opinion, has corrupted its Worship by human Mixtures and Additions, and which assumes and exercises an antichristian Authority over the Consciences of Men, to a Church, far more eligible in their Esteem, as the Ministrations thereof are more strictly agreeable to the Gospel Institution; it would be a declaring the Worship performed amongst the Dissenters less excellent, and less acceptable unto God, than that which is manifestly contaminated by human Inventions.—I may add, constant Communion, or entire Conformity, is, in effect, a betraying of Christian Liberty, and justifying unrighteous Impositions; it has moreover the Appearance of confining our Affection and Charity to a Party, and of disowning other religious Assemblies, as no Members of the Catholic Church.

VIII OBJECTION.

Dissenting from the established Church on Account of Things indifferent.

Q. Under how many Refuges have Church Ceremonies sought for Shelter and Protection?

A. Under the Pleas of Decency, Uniformity, Antiquity, ecclesiastical and civil Authority, Indifferency.

Q. But are not all these Defences weak and insufficient?

A. Yes.

I. Decency.

Q. Is it decent for Men to offer at amending, or adding to, God's Institutions?

A. No. On the contrary, it is a gross and even a profane Indecency, to mingle human Inventions with divine Appointments; it is setting both upon a Level; it is a real corrupting the Worship of God, ^h a mingling Clay with Iron; it is imposing, not on Man only, but on God, as if he was obliged to accept of their invented Worship: Since his Acceptance is the End of Worship.

Q. Was not GOD's Worship decent, edifying, and orderly, before human Ceremonies were introduced?

A. Yes; and will continue such, after they are all abolished.

^h 2 Cor. ii. 17.

Q. Can any thing be, properly speaking, decent and orderly, *the Want of which is attended with no Indecency or Disorder?*

A. No.

Q. But will the Want of human Ceremonies create any Indecency or Disorder in God's Worship?

A. No; and, therefore, according to the foregoing Concession, the Use of them can add no Decency or Order thereunto¹. If they had a natural Tendency this Way, the more of them, the greater Decency; and our Church would rather be to blame, for retaining so few as they have, and casting off so many which the Roman Pontiffs had obtruded². There is

¹ See Bishop Hoadley's Answ. to the Convoc. p. 290.

² Order and Decency arise from Nature, but Ceremony from Authority; therefore Ceremonies cannot be necessary to the Order and Decency of God's Worship. Order in one Thing cannot require another new Thing to be added, but only the right disposing of that one.

Those Ceremonies which have the Nature, Kind, and Definition of Worship belonging to them, so that they want nothing but a right Author to make them *true Worship*; these are in their Imposition and Use *Worship*, but, for want of a right Author, are *false Worship*: Such are Church Ceremonies. Ames's Fresh Suit, p. 159.

By *Rites and Ceremonies* I mean two different Things. By *Rites* I understand such Actions as have an inseparable Relation to the Circumstances and Manner of Worship; as whether the Sacrament be administered by a Bishop or a Deacon, whether *Lent* be observed one, two, or three Days;—these are necessary Concomitants of the Circumstances of divine Worship, or Circumstances themselves.—By *Ceremonies* I mean such Actions as have no Regard either

is as much Decency in the Priest's putting his Finger in a Child's Ear, in Prefiguration of its Readiness to hear God's Word; or putting Salt on its Tongue, in Token its Speech shall be favoury; as in crossing its Forehead, to signify it shall not be ashamed of Christ crucified: And as the Church of *Rome* practises all these, it will carry the Praise from ours, which has divested the baptismal Sacrament of the two former Decorations.

Q. But is it not a very indecent Sight, to behold a Minister of CHRIST going through a Course of these foppish Ceremonies, instead of the pure and reasonable Services of the Gospel?

A. Yes.

Q. Is not the Plea therefore of Decency, in behalf of human Ceremonies in God's Worship, vain and unsupportable?

A. Yes.

II. Uniformity.

Q. Can any Argument in behalf of human Ceremonies be drawn from the Necessity of Uniformity in Worship?

A. No.

Q. Is not Unity or Charity preferable to Uniformity?

either to the *Manner* or *Circumstances* of divine Worship; but the Act thereof may be performed without them; As Milk, Honey, &c. in Baptism, are not necessary to the Discharge of that Act of divine Worship. *Lord King's Enquiry*, Part II. chap. 10.

A. Yes;

A. Yes ; according to the ancient Rule,
 “ Unity in Things necessary, Liberty in Things
 not necessary, Charity in both.”

Q. *Are not Unity and Charity always im-
 paired or destroyed by a rigorous imposing of Uni-
 formity in Modes and Ceremonies of Worship ?*

A. Yes.

Q. *Is that Variety which is so conspicuous
 throughout the Universe the Deformity or Beauty
 of it ?*

A. Its Beauty.

Q. *Why then should Uniformity be essential to
 the Church's Beauty ; or why should not Variety
 rather conduce thereunto, as in the natural Cre-
 ation ?*

A. I can see no assignable Reason for the
 first, or against the latter¹.

Q. *Yet is there not really more Uniformity
 in the Worship performed in the several Congre-
 gations of Dissenters, though not enforced by any
 Act of Uniformity, than in the several Churches*

¹ Bishop Jewel quotes a Decree of Pope Innocent III.
 which might have become a better Man ; viz. *Quoniam
 in plerisque partibus, &c.* “ In regard in most Places, in the
 same City and Diocese, there are People of divers Lan-
 guages mingled together, who, under the same Faith, do
 retain diverse Ceremonies and Customs ; we do therefore
 expressly charge and command the Bishops of the said Cities
 and Dioceses to provide able Persons, who may celebrate
 amongst them the divine Offices, and administer to them
 the Sacraments, according to their different Languages and
 Ceremonies.” *Alfop's melius Inquir.* p. 20.

of England, though under the Authority of such an Act of Parliament?

A. Yes.

Q. Is not then the Plea of Uniformity, to patronize the Imposition and Practice of Ceremonies, insufficient, and, in the Mouths of Churchmen, ridiculous?

A. Yes.

III. ANTI-
QUITY.

Q. Can human Ceremonies, introduced into God's Worship, find any Protection from Antiquity?

A. No; not from primitive Antiquity, or the Practice of the first Christian Church.

Q. What does Christianity depend upon?

A. It depends solely upon divine Revelation.

Q. Then, whatever Parts of religious Worship are not found expressly or implicitly required in the original Records of Christianity, drawn up by the Apostles, ought they not to be discarded out of Christian Churches; however anciently they have obtained?

A. Yes.

IV. CIVIL
and Ec-
CLESIAS-
TICAL
AUTHO-
RITY.

Q. Can the Command of a MAGISTRATE or BISHOP make it a Duty, or lawful, to bring that into God's Worship, which was not a Duty, or lawful before?

A. No, certainly: For who but God can rightly declare or decree how he will or shall be worshipped?

Q. Is

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Q. Is not CHRIST a perfect and sufficient Teacher of Religion?

A. Yes.

Q. But could he be so, if he had not, himself, or by his Spirit in the Apostles, informed Men of every Part of necessary, useful, and acceptable Worship?

A. No.

Q. What Reflection then does the adding of Man's Inventions to God's Worship carry in it?

A. It is an indirect Impeachment of the Wisdom and Goodness, as well as an Affront to the Authority, of the Lord Jesus, the great Christian Prophet and King.

Q. Has the Magistrate or the Priest any Power to bless the Rites and Ceremonies they claim Authority to impose?

A. No, none at all.

Q. Is there any Reason to hope that God will bless them?

A. No, since he has not required them.

Q. Will the Souls of Men be benefited by any Thing which God does not countenance or bless?

A. No.

Q. Have Princes or Priests ever produced a Commission from God, for imposing any Parts or Modes of Worship not required in the New Testament?

A. No.

Q. Where

Q. Where great Men and Superiors have no Authority, or Right to command, are not inferior Men excused from Obedience?

A. Yes^m.

Q. What

^m Authority and Obedience are Correllatives: Where the former is not, the latter cannot be due. However, its urged, "That one may be obliged to act, in consequence of a Command not founded on Authority or Right; because, in some Cases, the Peace and Order of the Society may require such a Compliance, which *then* and *therefore* becomes a Duty: Not indeed by virtue of the Command, but for that the Peace and Order of Society are of great Importance and Value, and so not to be hazarded, even for the Maintenance of a Right; except the supporting or preserving that Right be more advantageous to the Society, than the disturbing its Peace is like to hurt it." It will be granted, this may sometimes be the Case; and, whenever it appears to be so, that is, whenever there is a high Probability of greater Evil attending a Refusal to comply with an unjustifiable Precept, than will attend Compliance, a wise and good Man will submit: Though in these Instances he ought to declare the Motive. But it must, on the other hand, be insisted on, that although this may possibly be the Case, it very rarely is so; but it is almost always true, "That Compliance with unjustifiable Commands is eventually more detrimental to Society, than any temporary Disturbance thereof, by Refusal, can well be: It encourages, and makes way for, more and greater Encroachments of arbitrary Power and tyrannical Imposition, and is the natural Introducer of that horrible Bondage, civil and ecclesiastical, under which the far greater Part of the World now groans." So that every one who submits to an unwarrantable Command, and every one that pleads for such a Submission, ought to reflect, that, perhaps, he is thereby accessory to one of the most execrable Villainies that can be acted: *For, in yielding the Right which his Creator conferred on him with his Being,*

V. INDIF-
FERENCY.

Q. What is the last Refuge to which the Defenders of Church Ceremonies have Recourse?

A. The Indifferency of them.

Q. What is a Thing indifferent?

A. Morally, it is an Action which is neither good nor evil, simply considered.

Q. Is it fit that Actions, which have no intrinsic Goodness, should, by human Authority, be made Parts of God's Worship?

A. No.

Q. Or can any Thing in the Worship of God be, properly, indifferent?

A. No; whatever goes to the constituting divine Worship must naturally tend to the Glory of God and the Edification of Souls.

Q. Can that be indifferent, which has an Aptness to inspire us with wrong Notions of Religion?

A. No; it must be morally Evil?

Q. Have not Church Ceremonies an Aptitude to make Men think that God's Worship is not perfect, nor will be accepted, without human Additions?

A. Yes.

Q. Does not imposing them lead Men to place some Religion in them, and to think they please God and profit the Soul?

A. Yes.

Being, as his distinguishing Excellence, as well as the Basis of his Happiness, he may be forging Chains of Slavery, for himself, for his Posterity, and Country.

Q. What

Q. What is a genuine Consequence of this?

A. That when People pay more Regard than is fitting to *Men's Inventions*, they are apt to pay less than is owing to *God's Institutions*.

Q. If they have this Tendency, do they not hereby cease to be indifferent, and become morally evil?

A. Yesⁿ.

Q. Nay, are those Actions indifferent, which, not being required of God, give Offence to good Men, when added to God's Worship?

A. No.

Q. Are not the Ceremonies in question of this Nature?

A. Yes; they have been objected to by thousands of wise and good Christians, as an Offence and Grief to them, ever since they were introduced into the Church^o.

Q. Is

ⁿ See a Tract of Divine Worship, and of indifferent Things, printed 1660.

Officit religioni quodcumque est superfluum, quippe imminuit vim & curam cæterorum, partemque sibi arripit animi qui vix totus sufficit rebus gravioribus & necessariis, &c. Burnet de Fide & Offic. Christi. p. 81, 12.

^o To be zealous for Ceremonies, when the People are against them, favours more of *Passion* in the Governors than of *Religion*; as if they had rather show their *Authority* than their *Charity*.—Let us leave it to Women and Children to contend about Ceremonies; let it be indifferent to us, whether this, or that, or no Ceremony; whether kneel or not kneel, bow or not bow, Surplice or not Surplice, Cross or no Cross: Let us give Glory to God only, and no Offence to our Brethren in any thing.

Reverend Fathers and Judges! when Christ on his Tribunal of Justice shall thus question you. "Have not several

R

"Souls

Q. Is not the revealed Will of God that alone which can ascertain the Propriety or Goodness of any mere Ceremony?

A. Yes; for the Goodness of these, or their Acceptableness to him, cannot be inferred from his Nature and Attributes, as moral Truths and Duties may.

Q. Is it not then a very high Presumption, to mix any which he has not ordained with his Worship, to enjoin his Servants to practise them, when they have not the least Reason to suppose they are agreeable in his Eye, and to hurt them for adhering closely to his express Command, with a steady Rejection of their arbitrary, uncertain, and unprofitable Rites?

A. Yes.

Q. Further, is not Will-Worship sinful Worship?

A. Yes. Colos. ii. 18, 23.

Q. Are not all the Parts of divine Service imposed by the mere Will and Authority of Men Will-Worship?

“Souls taken Offence at your Ceremonies, forsaken the Church and the Faith, and run into Hell; the Souls for which I shed my precious Blood; why have you suffered this? Why have you occasioned it?” Will you answer, *It was to preserve Ceremonies?* Will not Christ return, “Were your Ceremonies more dear to you than the Souls for whom I died? Who hath required these Things at your Hands? Did you for Ceremonies, which you confess to be indifferent, and no way necessary to Salvation, suffer weak Brethren to perish for whom I died?” *Ei hop Croft's Naked Truth, p. 11, 20, 21.*

If God's own Ceremonies were removed, because unprofitable, *Heb. vii. 18.* much more should Men's be removed, when not only unprofitable but hurtful.

A. Yes.

A. Yes.

Q. Are not bowing at the Name Jesus and to the Altar, and the dedicating Sign of the Cross, of this Nature?

A. Yes.

Q. Do they not then cease to be indifferent, and partake of Evil more than of Good?

A. Yes.

Q. Again, is not the imposing of Things indifferent a making more Duties and Sins than God has made, and so a making the Way to Heaven narrower than Christ left it, and setting up a human Authority as supreme in his Church?

A. Yes: And therefore let the Imposers wrangle, or abuse the Opposers, ever so much, they can never excuse themselves to their own Consciences, if they impartially reflect, or to considering Men, from the Antichristian Guilt spoken of, *2 Thes. ii. 3, 4.*

Q. Do not such Things as these, however indifferent in their Nature, become sinful when thus circumstantiated?

A. Yes.

Q. Again, may not that Worship, which is not prescribed by God, be deemed as forbidden by him?

A. Yes. Deut. xii. 32. Matth. xv. 9.

Q. But will any one say, that the Ceremonies of our established Church are commanded by God?

A. No.

Q. May

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Q. May they not therefore be considered as forbidden?

A. Yes.

Q. Can they be indifferent?

A. No; but sinful.

Q. Again, is that indifferent, which has a Tendency to create Divisions in the Church, and which has been the grand Occasion of many Contentions and Persecutions, and much shedding of Blood, in all Ages?

A. No.

Q. But are not these the never-failing Fruits of the Imposition of doubtful Things, and such as are termed indifferent?

A. Yes P.

Q. Do they not cease to be indifferent, when these Effects of imposing them are foreknown?

A. Yes.

Q. Once more, upon the Principles, and according to the Usage, of the Church of England, are the Ceremonies indifferent?

It has been chiefly on the Account of Ceremonies, to force the Observation of them, that Warrants of Distress have been granted, and Writs of Excommunication issued out, &c.

Let the Church admit of the Use and Practice of some Things not absolutely necessary, yet not in their Nature sinful, nor for Multitude burdensome, nor for Abuse suspected, nor in their instituted Use sacramental, and not impose them as necessary Conditions of Communion; and if there be less Uniformity, there will be more Unity, Love, and Charity. *Alsop's Enquiry*, p. 205.

A. No,

A. No, far from it; for the Church accounts them to be, and practises them as, *decent, significant, and edifying, if not efficacious and operative.*

Q. Can those Ceremonies be truly reckoned indifferent, which are commanded by Authority, defended with Zeal, and the Omission of which is punished with Cruelty?

A. No, surely.

Q. Can any thing be more unfair, or manifest a greater Want of Candour, than to represent the Ceremonies as little Things, when the Imposition and Practice of them are to be defended, but to change Note, and treat them as great Things, when the Neglect of them comes to be censured or punished?

A. Such a Behaviour is altogether unworthy of Christians.

Q. Can those Ceremonies and Modes be judged indifferent, which are made so necessary, that without them Christians shall have none of the Ordinances of JESUS CHRIST.

A. No; such a Constitution bespeaks them the most important Things in the World.

Q. If Church Governors do esteem them as important, is their Judgment, however, to be the Rule of other Men's Consciences?

A. No; every Man must see with his own Eyes, even though they should not be so clear or strong as those of his Superiors; nor is every Man, who has a better Understanding than his Neighbours, to chuse their Religion for them.

Q. May

Q. May not they justly claim the Liberty of judging what is sinful, who are to be condemned if they do sin?

A. Yes.

Q. Finally, When the Imposers of Ceremonies can abate them, and not sin, but the Dissenters cannot practise them without sinning, is it not highly fit the Imposers should resign their Ceremonies, rather than the Dissenters give up the Truths of God, and violate their Consciences?

A. Yes.

F I N I S.



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